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Convergent Grounds: Black and Native Women Imagining America

by

Carlye Anne Schock

Under the Direction of Audrey Goodman, PhD

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2021

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines fictional and visual texts by Native American and Black American women writers created from 1891 to 2008 that imagine the intersections of Native and Black experience in America. It considers these primary questions: how do Native-authored texts imagine Black experience/identity and intersectional experience? How do Black-authored texts imagine Native experience/identity and intersectional experience? How do these narratives consequently reimagine the settler colonial record and “speak back” to national American mythologies that triangulate Black, Native, and White identities for the purposes of state-building? To what extent do these fictional texts by women challenge, reimagine, and deconstruct this mythic triangulation as intersectional?

I argue that texts created by Sophia Alice Callahan (Muscogee Creek), Pauline Hopkins, Carrie Mae Weems, LeAnne Howe (Oklahoma Choctaw), Wendy RedStar (Crow), and Julie Dash serve to importantly make visible crucial intersectional omissions in the settler map that challenge the historico-racial schema of heteropatriarchal white European settler colonial discourse, creating possibilities for new epistemologies. The visual and written narratives considered here directly confront a state-serving triangulation of Red, Black, and White through an interrogation of multiple grounds: a nineteenth century discourse of racial purity that persists unrelentingly into the present, the methodologies of archival encounter and documentary practices that aim to cast Black and Native creators as ethnographic specimen, the limitations of the Euro-American novel form, and settler-colonial mappings of Black and Native geographies that seek to both enforce a narrative of racial purity and confine Black and Native communities to a space of liminality.

The artists and writers considered here imagine these grounds as defined by Black and Native agency and convergence, but not without a complexity that gestures towards the legacies of U.S-driven narratives of racial purity. To identify this complexity, I argue for a radical and intersectional reading practice centered on examining multiple texts (novels, art installations, archival documents, maps, and photographs) simultaneously and in conversation. This is a practice that aims to posit reading itself as an exercise in symbiosis: a tool capable of sensing, delineating, and recovering moments where languages, geographies, and histories converge. I argue that intersectional reading as methodology highlights the possibilities of decolonial exchange between literary studies, visual analysis, Black studies, and Indigenous studies. At the same time, it points towards the convergence of imaginary spaces and material social justice movements focused on Indigenous sovereignty and land rights, Black/Indigenous retention and celebration of cultural ways, and the collective assertion of dignity and autonomy.

INDEX WORDS: Indigenous Studies, Black Studies, Women Writers, Feminist Theory

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2021

Convergent Grounds: Black and Native Women Imagining America

by

Carlye Anne Schock

Committee Chair: Audrey Goodman

Committee: Elizabeth West

Tiffany Lethabo King

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Services

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

August 2021

## **DEDICATION**

To my Black and Native colleagues, students, collaborators, and family.

“I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.” –Audre Lorde

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And lastly, to my children Emmaline and Cora. I wanted to show you what a mother and woman could dream, in spite of circumstances that labor against her. You are my heart-work.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 LANGUAGE, “PURITY,” AND POWER IN SOPHIA ALICE CALLAHAN’S WYNEMA AND PAULINE HOPKINS’ <i>WINONA</i> .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>3 REIMAGINING ARCHIVAL ENCOUNTER IN FRANCES BENJAMIN JOHNSTON’S <i>THE HAMPTON ALBUM</i> AND CARRIE MAE WEEMS’ <i>THE HAMPTON PROJECT</i>.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>4 INDIGIENIZING ARCHIVAL FICTIONS: LEANNE HOWE’S <i>MIKO KINGS</i></b>	<b>120</b>
<b>5 INTERSECTIONAL RESPATIALIZATION IN JULIE DASH’S <i>DAUGHTERS OF THE DUST</i> .....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>6 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>205</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 From the cover of a brochure for the exhibit “Tenacity: Women in Jamestown and Early Virginia.” November 10, 2018-January 5, 2020. Jamestown Settlement. ....	19
Figure 2 Carrie Mae Weems, The Hampton Project Installation View, 2000. Williams College Museum of Art. ....	105
Figure 3 Carrie Mae Weems, The Hampton Project. Installation View. 2000. Williams College Museum of Art. ....	106
Figure 4 Frances Benjamin Johnston. Hampton Album. “Class in Dressmaking.” 1900. MOMA. ....	107
Figure 5 Frances Benjamin Johnston. Hampton Album. “Class in American History.” 1900. MOMA. ....	108
Figure 6 , Frances Benjamin Johnston. “Thanksgiving Day Lesson at the Whittier.” 1900. MOMA. ....	109
Figure 7 Frances Benjamin Johnston. “About 400 Students in Memorial Chapel.” 1900. MOMA. ....	110
Figure 8 Carrie Mae Weems, The Hampton Project. Installation View. 2000. Williams College Museum of Art. ....	110
Figure 9 American Negro Exhibit, Paris Exposition, 1900. ....	111
Figure 10 MOMA’s Hampton Album Exhibition View, 1966. ....	112
Figure 11 Up-close image of Ada Bradley, center, in Johnston’s “About 400 Students in Memorial Chapel.” 1900. MOMA. ....	113
Figure 12 Frances Benjamin Johnston. Hampton Album. “Kindergarten Children washing and ironing.” 1900. MOMA. ....	114

Figure 13 Up-close image of Ada Bradley, center, in Johnston's "Post-graduate class of 1900."

1900. MOMA.....	115
Figure 14 Frances Benjamin Johnston. "Adele Quinney." 1900. MOMA. ....	116
Figure 15 Frances Benjamin Johnston. "History. A Class at Fort Monroe." 1900. MOMA.....	117
Figure 16 Frances Benjamin Johnston. "Geography. Studying the Cathedral Towns." 1900. MOMA.....	118
Figure 17 Frances Benjamin Johnston. "Geography. Studying the Seasons." 1900. MOMA ...	119
Figure 18 Wendy RedStar. Peelatchiwaaxpáash/Medicine Crow. 2014. Red ink on laser-jet printing.....	153
Figure 19 Leanne Howe. Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story, 2007, pp. 1-2.....	154
Figure 20 Leanne Howe. Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story, 2007, pp. 3-4.....	155
Figure 21 Leanne Howe. Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story, 2007, pp. 5-6.....	156
Figure 22 LeAnne Howe. Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story, 2007, pp. 129. ....	157
Figure 23 LeAnne Howe. Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story, 2007, pp. 130-131. ....	157
Figure 24 LeAnne Howe. Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story, 2007, pp. 136-137. ....	158
Figure 25 LeAnne Howe. Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story, 2007, pp. 149.....	159
Figure 26 Carrie Mae Weems: Sea Island Series, 1991-92. ....	195
Figure 27 Carrie Mae Weems: Sea Island Series, 1991-92. ....	196
Figure 28 Carrie Mae Weems: Sea Island Series, 1991-92. ....	197
Figure 29 United States Coast Survey. Preliminary chart of St. Helena Sound, South Carolina. [Washington, U.S. Coast Survey, 1864] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress. .....	198

Figure 30 Vignoles, Charles Blacker, and Henry Ravenel. Beaufort County, South Carolina. [South Carolina: Publisher not identified, 1873] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.....	199
Figure 31 Close-up of Beaufort County, South Carolina. ....	200
Figure 32 United States Soil Conservation Service, and South Carolina Land Resources Conservation Commission. Important farmlands map, Beaufort County, South Carolina. [Columbia, S.C.: 1979] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress. ....	200
Figure 33 Close-up of Important farmlands map, Beaufort County, South Carolina. ....	201
Figure 34 Frank M. Hohenberger. “Miss Gleason and live oak tree—7 feet, Datah Island,”1938. Courtesy The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. ....	202
Figure 35 Middle House Unit 33 Profile, from “The Historical Development of Dataw Island. Prepared for ALCOA South Carolina by Eric C. Poplin, 1993. ....	203
Figure 36 Artifact Class Frequencies for the Middle House, from “The Historical Development of Dataw Island. Prepared for ALCOA South Carolina by Eric C. Poplin, 1993. ....	204

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Prelude

A story is active and a story changes the world.

-LeAnne Howe

I want to begin with three stories.

I am White.<sup>1</sup> Like many Americans, my family is culturally and racially blended. Part of my family, due to marriage, is Native, and I grew up in proximity to both this family and other Indigenous communities in San Diego County, California.<sup>2</sup>

Like many White people, I never thought much about my racial identification as a child. One November, however, when I was nine, I was sitting at the dinner table with some of my Native family, and the conversation turned to issues of race. My uncle, a Native man, began to share his views on the increasing number of African American-owned businesses in our town, spewing—much to my surprise—some of the most anti-Black vitriol I have ever heard. His paranoia concerning his own loss of social position and prominence in the community at the hands of Black “intruders” was evident. His racist connection of Black people to animals undeserving of roles in society evoked long legacies of anti-Black rhetoric in some Native communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Following the model of Patricia Hill Collins, I capitalize racialized terminology like “White” and “Black” in this dissertation project as an acknowledgement of their artificiality and constructedness.

<sup>2</sup> I use the terms “Native,” “Native American,” “American Indian,” and “Indigenous” interchangeably throughout this project, in an attempt to reflect the myriad ways the indigenous people of the North American continent call themselves. I am interested in the implications of each term, their histories, and the tensions that continue to govern language and race.

What struck me in that moment, though, as my uncle continued his monologue undeterred by anyone else in my White/Native family, still strikes me now: how capacious is the human heart for unbridled hatred.

Let me tell another story.

My maternal grandfather, a White man, fancied himself an amateur archaeologist. All along the central California coast, he researched, tracked, and excavated Chumash burial sites. He would come home with his spoils: baskets full of intricate blue beads, arrowheads, and even bones. His house was decorated with what he termed his “treasures,” in addition to dream-catchers, eagle feathers, and ceremonial blankets he purchased from local Indigenous communities. Ten years before his death, he moved to Ada, Oklahoma—what used to be called “Indian Territory,” and now is the headquarters of the Chickasaw Nation—to be in close proximity to a different area of what he termed “Indian excavation.” Even as a child, his acts seemed to me a serious violation, fraught with fetishization and violence: what sort of human would want to rob a grave? His rows of “artifacts” lined up on his living room shelves were carefully arranged and catalogued, and he genuinely believed he was complicit in meaningful historical work. After his death, his children—all White—fought over his “collection.” It’s part of who he was, they said—part of how “we want to remember Dad.”

A final story.

The day after passing my oral examinations for my PhD, I called my mom. As a long-supporter of my education, I knew she'd be happy for me. As a first-generation college student, however, explaining my academic work to my family has always been difficult. After I told her my news, she called out to another family member in the background to let them know, and I felt a familiar tremor convulse up my spine. This family member hadn't spoken to me since just after the presidential election in 2016, the same year I started my doctoral program. The deeper I got into my area of study, the more I read, traveled, studied, and learned, the more my isolation from them grew. From their Fox News, Tucker Carlson, and Donald Trump saturated worldview, I was the antithesis of a patriotic American: I was now a liberal conduit of the corrupt university system, indoctrinating students with critical race theory, and myself with ideas that threatened the nuclear family and American legacies of "great White man" history.

'Wow,' I heard them reply sarcastically, their voice muffled by distance. 'Is she going to go buy a Black Lives Matter t-shirt now and march in the streets?'

I could tell more stories about my personal family history and our embeddedness in this complex triangulation of Black, Native, and White identity, as located in a settler-colonial state that still enacts violences of dehumanization and erasure against Black and Native people. I tell these stories here not as an apology, nor what Tuck and Yang call a "settler move to innocence," (9) but to situate my positionality, albeit briefly and representationally, as researcher and writer. I also want to illustrate a point that is both personal and political: my Native family's ardent anti-Blackness played a large role in the ways I came to understand, as I matured, racial hierarchies in American imaginaries. My grandfather's fetishization of Native culture—as a form of anti-

Nativeness—both horrified me as a child and shaped the way I viewed White appropriations of Native identity. My family’s White supremacy continues to cast a long shadow over the way I live, act, and raise my children within a framework of familial isolation I never would have freely chosen. My embeddedness in these histories—as a researcher, scholar, and White person negotiating lived experience—is the position from which I write.

My interest in the subject of this project—Black, Native, and White intersectional experience in American history as imagined by Black and Native women writers—begins with family stories like these. It begins the way many writers, I imagine, begin: with a desire to explain complex life experiences to themselves. In my case, I initially wanted to interrogate my family’s extraordinary anti-Blackness and anti-Nativeness, to *see* its roots as entangled in the lineage of what bell hooks calls white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy, and as married to a legacy of settler-colonialism.

I have also embarked on this project with many explicit privileges: my study is not one of my own life and death. I have the peculiar, weighty privilege to be able to research, study, and think about whatever I want. I am not, like many Black and Native women, negotiating for my own intellectual, creative, cultural, and material survival.

With awareness of this privileged subject position, I work in collaboration with Black and Native thinkers, writers, and artists who have always been thinking and writing, even before White institutional structures found it profitable to acknowledge them as creators. I default to their theories and methodologies concerning their own work, their own histories, and their own lives. It is the only way, I think, to do this work responsibly: slowly, collaboratively, and with an awareness of the invisible presence of Whiteness that so often guides the methodology and discourse of academia.



And yet I also must acknowledge that as a White person, this project is accompanied by lived tensions. As previously mentioned, my academic pursuits have alienated me from some of my family—both White and Native. My interest in thinking and writing about the delicate entanglements of identity as a framework for American White supremacy, and about a narrative of “racial purity” as necessary for hetero-patriarchal-settler-colonial American identity stasis, has incited waves of hatred and vitriol from those close to me.

In my academic and personal experience, this is often the cost of collaborating on work that posits anti-racist futures: it can lead to a rejection by White communities who view your labor as a violation of White allegiance, lineage and futurity. My family’s very personal rejection emphasizes a foundational point I want to make about Black, Native, and White triangulation in America: those of us living, working, and negotiating lived experience within the so-called “United States” are all deeply entrenched in its state-sanctioned propaganda. It is in its untangling, its demystification, its exposure as an *imaginary*, and its respatialization as intersectional, I suggest, that we can begin to dream of decolonial futures.

This project begins at the intersection of this positionality and the possibilities of collaborative work despite the limitations of state-driven mythologies of racial harmony, reconciliation, unity, and cohesion.

It begins with a recognition of settler *embeddedness* in any and all projects, and an acknowledgement of how this impacts research, reading, writing, and argument.

It begins with a belief that, as Tuck and Yang note, “solidarity is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict” (3).

It begins with a recognition that we all lose in the face of anti-Blackness and anti-Nativeness.

It begins with story.

### **Reading African/Indigenous/European Histories in the U.S.: Mythologies of “The Triangle”**

Colonial histories of U.S. empire are predicated on the spatial, philosophical, and ideological framework of a triangle: a geometric shape with three disparate points that are also intimately connected by planes and angles, dictating a complex relationality. For example, Jamestown, Colonial Williamsburg, and Yorktown—three historic colonial communities located on the Virginia Peninsula—have long been termed “The Historic Triangle,” and are still promoted as such by a robust cultural heritage tourism industry intent on linking these three sites as points of U.S. origin. Their triangulation also denotes a history of transaction and exchange: Jamestown as the site of the first permanent English settlement in North America, Williamsburg as capital of the Virginia Colony from 1699 to 1780 and a major player in the American Revolution, and Yorktown as the site of the siege and subsequent surrender of General Charles Cornwallis to General George Washington and the French Fleet during the American Revolutionary War. According to the official Williamsburg website, visitors can “trace the origin of American history” through an exploration of these three sites.

Through traveling the contours of the wedge-shaped reconstructed Jamestown settlement on the banks of the James River, to a Disneyland-esque reconstructed Williamsburg replete with period costumes and elaborate historical roleplay, to a solemn moment on a verdant Yorktown battlefield, visitors can trace the supposed triangularity of America's origins.

The triangle as organizing factor of U.S. settler colonialism does not end here, however. A brief purview of mainstream U.S. histories reveals further triangulation: the so-called “iron triangle” of U.S. government, defined as the policy-making relationship between congressional committees, the bureaucracy and special interest groups, and the triangular arrangement of U.S. governance through the establishment of executive, judicial, and congressional branches. Additionally, historians have long outlined the impacts and effects of a spatial and ideological system of “triangular trade,” defined as the colonial-era exchange between Europe, Africa, and the Americas wherein Europe supplied Africa and the Americas with finished goods, the Americas supplied Europe and Africa with raw materials, and Africa “supplied” the Americas and Europe with enslaved labor. This continental triangulation in mythic U.S. history—often to the exclusion of more complex global ecologies—evokes a similar triangulation of White, Black, and American Indian identities as foundational to an emergent eighteenth and nineteenth century concept of U.S. racial politics. For example, even a brief examination of historical racial categorization in U.S. census efforts reveals a focus on predominately White, Black, and American Indian identities that began in 1860, and persisted until 1950.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This triangulation was disrupted briefly in 1860, when the designation “Chinese” was added to census options, but only in California. In 1870, due to an influx of immigrants from both China and Japan, a “Chinese/Japanese” designation was added nation-wide. See “Measuring Race and Ethnicity Across the Decades: 1790 to 2010,” census.gov. Accessed April 27 2021.

In mythic U.S. historical memory, the triangle is predicated on the illusion of equity: it is imagined as equilateral, and no point or side carries more weight than the next. If we turn specifically to the lives and work of women—on which this dissertation project focuses—a preoccupation with equitable lines and angles emerges as fundamental to contemporary efforts towards establishing the illusion of historical racial and gender “solidarity.” In a recent exhibition at the historic Jamestown settlement entitled “Tenacity: Women in Jamestown and Early Virginia,” curators go to great lengths to promote a fictitious narrative of equity, reconciliation, sisterhood, and a form of unity in “bondage.” The exhibition’s curation suggests that White, African, and Indigenous women were “brought” to Jamestown under various auspices (marriage, enslavement, as peacemakers) and are equal heirs in a robust project of recovery that imagines Jamestown as a site of triangulated origin. On exhibit from November 10, 2018 to January 5, 2020, the promotional brochure states that “In 1619, women from many different cultures met at Jamestown...Remember the names of these women and speak them. Share their stories. Give them a voice, and restore them to their rightful place in history.” Building on a historical trend of recovery concerning “lost” women’s narratives, the exhibition prominently features a photograph, likely taken explicitly for promotional purposes, of three women: A White woman in colonial dress, a Black woman dressed in a shell choker and blue tube top, her midriff exposed, and a presumably American Indian woman, dressed in a fringed garment with tribal markings on her forehead, cheeks, and chin (Figure 1). All three models confront the camera directly, their faces resolute, and their bodies overlapping, touching, in close contact: a visual recognition of the supposedly sisterly interconnectivity between White, African, and Indigenous women in early Virginia. The exhibit itself continues this triangulation through the display of archival documents and objects that gesture towards women’s histories in

Jamestown: papers documenting the first arrival of European women, a “Muster of the Inhabitants of Virginia, January 1624-25” containing the name Angelo, supposedly the first African woman in the settlement, and an English-created silver frontlet documenting early treaties with the Pamunkey supposedly brokered by Queen Cockacoeske.

As an exercise in cultural memory, “Tenacity” promotes a triangulation of Black, White, and Indigenous women as predicated on the falsity of historical equity. Through the preservation of a discourse of racial “purity” and categorization essential to the process of U.S. state-building, the exhibit also negates any possibility of overlap, thus negating the historical realities of White, Black, and Indigenous intersectional encounter in the emergent “U.S.” and its effects on these state-sanctioned cultural imaginaries of racial purity. The state, of course, has had—and still has—much at stake in preserving clear categories of Black, Native, and White: in the 1860 census, for example, the designation of “Indian” served as a justification for land disenfranchisement and infantilization as wards of the state; “Black” and “Mulatto” justified enslavement and a demarcation as capital, alongside a lack of citizenship and access to rights, whereas “White” dictated the parameters of landownership and citizenry.

A contestation of this mythic triangulation, however, has been long-addressed by scholars committed to demystifying U.S. cultural memory. Scholars like Jack Forbes (Powhatan-Renape/Delaware-Lenape), Daniel Littlefield, and Eric Nash have written at-length about the historical interactions of Native Americans and Africans in North America and a resulting cultural syncretism. Forbes’ seminal work, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* importantly tracks American/African contact that likely occurred prior to European colonization, and traces the evolution of key racial terminology like *negro*, *black*, *mestizos*, and *mulatto* as connected to both African and American

identities. Daniel Littlefield's extensive histories on African and Native intersections from the Colonial period to the Civil War track the effects of slavery, removal, and emancipation on both groups (*Africans and Creeks*). In *Red, White & Black: Peoples of Early North America*, Gary B. Nash historically traces the triangulation of Europe, Africa, and the "New World" through an examination of triangulated slavery, the Seven Years War and the American Revolution, and outlines the robust cultural interaction that occurred as a result of diaspora. Additional historians and scholars like Claudio Saunt, Tiya Miles, Theda Perdue, James Brooks, Circe Sturm, Laura L. Lovett, Tiffany Lethabo King, and Mark Rifkin have also explored the material, methodological, and theoretical connections between Black and Native people, and their implications in contemporary conversations concerning racial discourse, citizenship, and sovereignty.

These histories of overlap and cultural intersection—long acknowledged in the lived experiences, ancestral stories, and private archives of Black and Native people—have complicated the monolithic narrative of equilateral origin weaponized by mainstream U.S. historiography. As literary critic Jonathan Brennan has posited in *When Breer Rabbit Meets Coyote*, this syncretism also extends to creative practices: Brennan outlines the connection between African and Native folklore and written practices, arguing for an African-Native literary tradition in America that has emerged through shared geographic space, the institution of slavery, and the common ground of intra-generational historic trauma. Similarly, a 2009 publication by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian and edited by Gabrielle Tayac titled *indiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the America*, also highlights "the lived realities of individuals and communities in the intersections of African American and Native American worlds" (16). Scholars like Brennan and Tayac et. al suggest the value of examining moments and spaces of African-Native encounter and their effects on

creative practices: art, literature, archival creation, mapping, the collection of family histories and genealogies, and document preservation.

In light of these histories and this scholarly work, this dissertation project begins with four fundamental extending questions: What happens when we turn to the work of Black and Native women writers and artists as a means to evaluate and critique a state-sanctioned triangulation of White, Black, and Native identities? How have Black and Native women critiqued fictions of Blackness, Whiteness, and Indianness and created alternate imaginaries as acts of survivance? What happens at the intersection of unsettled settler imaginaries and decolonized cartographies of space, archive, and text? And, importantly, what kinds of alternate myth-making lurks in the crevices and corners of this imaginary and material work?

I argue for a centering of women's work because, like Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Band of Seneca), I am interested in delving "critically into the construction of gender, heteropatriarchy, and race categories as instrumental to colonial logics" (*Mark My Words* 14). I turn specifically to texts written and created by women that have been left out of anthologies, exercises in canon formation, and collections of "national" literatures. I seek to center what has been pushed to the margins by literary scholars, the academic industrial complex, and the exclusionary politics of publishing companies who have long histories of interest in Black and Native women as ethnographic subjects and not agential *creators*. Like Gayatri Spivak, I am interested in what Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean term "the margins at which disciplinary discourses break down and enter the world of political agency" (3). What happens when we move from archive, to visual text, to novel, and to art installation as sites of both discursive and disciplinary intersection? What happens when we center an insurgent relationality as both

methodology and theory, and consider the archive, the visual text, the novel, and the art installation as grounds of *convergence*?<sup>4</sup>

To briefly answer the four fundamental questions this projects centers, I argue that re-reading texts by Black and Native women deconstructs the mythic triangulation of state-sanctioned racial categories. It complicates their angles, collapses their planes, and reimagines staunch geometric form as kaleidoscopic: a tangle of lines, curves, planes, angles, meeting points, overlaps, and moments of both parallelism and intersection. At the same time, re-reading texts by Black and Native women in search of relationality also breaks down disciplinary discourses and genres, and categories like archive, art, film, novel, photograph, and exhibition become equally kaleidoscopic. Rather than disparate sites predicated on Western definitions of literature and art, they vibrate with decolonial possibility. It is important to note, however, that these texts do not escape the racial and colonial logics of the state or render them obsolete: theirs is not a neo-liberal dream of utopian multiculturalism. Rather, I argue that these texts complicate what has been established in mainstream historiography as seemingly simple: the mythic triangle of US racial identity collapses, but its categories, labels, and delineations remain prescient.

Methodologically, I draw from the work of Black and Native scholars working at the intersections of race, gender, historiography, and geography. Fundamentally, I focus on the work of Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, and their introduction in *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*. I am particularly interested in the same productive question they pose: “What happens when key issues in African diasporic experience, such as migration, freedom, citizenship, belonging, peoplehood, and cultural retention and

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<sup>4</sup> I owe this terminology of “grounds” to the work of Katherine McKittrick, particularly *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. For McKittrick, “grounds” evokes both cartographic materialities and imaginaries, and I extend her terminology here to cover the cultural terrain of novel, archive, document, and photograph.



creation, and key issues in Native American experience, such as tribalism, protection of homelands, self-determination, political sovereignty, and cultural-spiritual preservation and renewal, converge?” (4). My methodology and my fundamental argument for a historical realization of the important and complicated intersections between the lives of Native and Black people in the United States is ultimately an issue of social justice—tied deeply and importantly to the issues of sovereignty, equality, citizenship, and freedom that affect real, living, contemporary communities.

I also draw foundationally from Jodi Byrd’s (Chickasaw) expansive work in *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, and the possibility for “robust intersections between postcolonial, subaltern, and indigenous worlds” (125). Byrd discusses the “presumed self-evidentiary process of minoritization, of making racial what is international” in conversations about the “unresolved histories of removal, slavery, racialization, allotment, settlement, and sovereignty”—and the larger racialization of citizenship (126). Using the example of the Cherokee Nation and the inclusion of Cherokee Freedmen, Byrd argues against the concept of “internal colonialism” that only services the racialized discourse of the United States and instead suggests that the inclusion of the Freedmen into the Cherokee Nation does not have to “result in the radical exclusion of the Cherokee Nation from itself” (125). I use Byrd’s definition and critique of internal colonialism to structure my discussion of an existing American racial mythos as well as to point towards the possibilities for epistemic rupture in imaginary narrative spaces.

Extending this theoretical scaffolding into the terrain of the novel, art installation, and archive requires a reading strategy posited on noticing intersection: a practice that aims to posit reading itself as an exercise in symbiosis, a tool capable of sensing, delineating, and recovering

moments where languages, geographies, and histories converge. This kind of reading is an act of resistance against the geometric triangulation of Black, Native, and White identities in mythic U.S. history, as well as the overarching narrative of categorical “difference” (as noted on census forms, school registration documents, and medical forms, to name only a few) weaponized against Black and Native communities by White institutional structures. This kind of reading is invested in uncovering relationality, defined as moments of plurality, convergence, and symbiosis, rather than a homogenizing discourse of “sameness.”

I posit this type of reading as “intersectional”: a practice invested in reading multiple texts at once, and holding one text cautiously, delicately, and timorously, to the light of another in order to see what new relational revelations emerge. Reading intersectionally, I suggest, practices what Dwayne Donald calls “an ethics of relation”: a practice that centers an “ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (“Forts, Curriculum, and Indigenous Métissage” 6). This is not a methodology designed around textual comparison, but rather centers a recovery of relationality—between authors, geographies, source material, archival documentation, and representation—as a tool in deconstructing state-sanctioned categorizations and geometries that work to deny sovereignty, equity, and justice for Black and Native people.

For example, in Chapter 1, I examine late nineteenth and early twentieth century lexicons of Blackness, Nativeness, and Whiteness through an intersectional reading of S. Alice Callahan’s *Wynema: A Child of the Forest* and Pauline Hopkins’ *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest*. Callahan’s text, the first known novel by an American Indian woman to be published in the United States, has long been marginalized as “sentimental fiction.” Reading

Callahan's work through the lens of a late nineteenth century heterogeneous Creek Nation, I interrogate her use of the phrase "Black Indian" as representative of a broader discourse of era-specific Creek racial discourse. Similarly, I analyze Hopkins' creation of a hybrid Black/Seneca/White family in 1870s New York, arguing for a reading of Winona and Judah as racially Black but culturally Native. I argue that both Callahan and Hopkins grapple with the racialized legacies of a late nineteenth century lexicon of racial "purity" and contribute to a controversial new discourse of Black and Native racial hybridity. It requires, however, reading Callahan alongside Hopkins to fully envision the complexity of this racialized discourse in historical and imaginary context.

Chapter 2 turns to a reading of the archive as an important grounds for reimagining triangulated racial fictions. I read Carrie Mae Weems' 2000 exhibition *The Hampton Project* and its ensuing controversy as both theory and methodology, and then reexamine Frances Benjamin Johnston's 1900 photographs of Hampton Institute for Blacks and Indians through this lens. I argue that reading Johnston's project—its inception, creation, circulation, and reception—through the lens of Weems' project allows for a re-framing of archival encounter and institutional record as sites of haptic and radical relationality and transit, and thus rethink conventionally accepted Black and Native histories. Most importantly, using Weems' project as analytical framework highlights the complex relationships between White viewer/photographer/institutional structure and Black/Native subjects within the broader discourse of early twentieth century state-sanctioned Indian policy.

In Chapter 3, I read LeAnne Howe's (Oklahoma Choctaw) *Miko Kings: An American Baseball Story* alongside the archival photographic work of Wendy Red Star (Crow). I analyze Howe's novel as an example of what I term "archival fiction": a hybrid novel/archival form that

has enormous possibilities as a decolonial tool capable of subverting narratives of temporal and spatial stasis in Black and Native communities. By reimagining the novel form through the creation of an Indigenized archival encounter, Howe mediates the connection between materiality and immateriality, Western European “narrative” and Choctaw “story,” and posits this mediation as an antidote to colonial empiricism. Through the structuring inclusion of maps, reimagined newspaper articles, a character’s journal, a letter, photographs, a film still, and oral narrative voiced by a returned ancestor, the novel itself becomes a haptic and archival encounter that runs orthogonal to established national histories and interrogates the epistemological foundations of colonial knowledge and research.

Finally, Chapter 4 turns to geography, both material and imaginary, as a grounds central to the process of interrogating racial fictions. Through a reading of Julie Dash’s film/novel, *Daughters of the Dust* alongside visual and cartographic renderings of the South Carolina Sea Islands, I argue for the possibilities of the insurgent respatialization of Black and Native overlapping diaspora spaces. Through the imagination of spaces that belie settler colonial histories of Black land loss, Dash imagines the Sea Islands as sites of multiplicity and heterogeneity, unknowable to ethnographic and anthropological endeavor. This respatialization counters long legacies of the islands as homogenously “Black” and devoid of culture, progress, and Black-enacted place-making. Instead, Dash makes visible the islands as a site of possibility and overlapping diaspora that exists beyond settler colonial imaginaries and has important implications for contemporary narratives of Black and Native land disenfranchisement.

The readings presented in all four chapters center multiplicity and hybridity—of identity, form, and theory—within a larger framework of relationality. They bring archive, visual record, novel, and art installation into conversation as both imaginary and material spaces that reveal

moments of Black, Native, and White convergence. At the same time, however, I read with an awareness of the constructedness of “reading” and its reliance on the positionality of the reader, their temporality, geography, and access to representation. I posit intersectional reading as acknowledging the relationality between the *reader* and the *read*.

Not coincidentally, the visual and written texts I examine here by Black and Native women all center the historical terrain of late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. Evoking W.E.B. DuBois’ proclamation in 1903 that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line,” these works acknowledge this era as pivotal in the development of U.S. racial fictions and a discourse of racial purity that even in 2021 dictates legal and judiciary precedent (*The Souls of Black Folk* 3). For American Indians, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were characterized by intensive efforts on behalf of the U.S. government to solve the “Indian Problem”: removal, the Dawes Act and efforts towards allotment, and an assimilative boarding school program. For Black communities, this same era saw the end of Reconstruction, the advent of Jim Crow law and segregation, and waves of anti-Black terrorism.

The centering of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the works examined here also suggests these spatiotemporalities as important grounds for the work of reimagination. In returning to these timescapes, in reexamining and reimagining racial fictions of Blackness, Indianness, and Whiteness at these very specific points in narrative time, the authors and creators studied in this dissertation project suggest the insurgent implications of the *then* in the *now*. This evokes what LeAnne Howe terms the “unending connections to past, present, and future” evident in Indigenous stories, and the way making these connections visible can contribute to decolonial futures for Black and Indigenous communities (“The Story of America” 47)

I begin this project, however, with an awareness of what Tuck and Yang call “the too-easy adoption of decolonizing discourse,” and the popular practice in both academic and public spaces of using “decolonization” as a metaphor. They outline this act as a dangerous practice that can interfere with the creation of “more meaningful potential alliances” (4). I suggest that centering the work of Black and Native women and tracing their imaginaries is not only an exercise in untangling metaphor, but also bears impact on material realities: reading Callahan and Hopkins’ novels evokes the legacies of racialized language that still affect census designations of race and belonging and control resource, job, and education access; reading Weems’ work evokes the still-resonant legacies of assimilative boarding school programs and narratives of Native erasure implicated in the industrial complex of both K-12 and higher education; reading Howe’s work evokes the continued marginalization of Indigenous communities as ethnographic specimen instead of agentive creators of their own archives and repositories of memory; and Dash’s novel and film evokes a painful history of ancestral land loss on the South Carolina Sea Islands for Gullah Geechee communities, a narrative of forfeiture that has continued unabated through the enormous upheaval of the Covid-19 pandemic. An attentiveness to this intersection of imaginary and material grounds, I suggest, is one way to resist the seductive allure of metaphor, and the trap of decolonizing discourse that is so often accompanied by a call for neo-liberal multiculturalism and unity.

It is where the material and the imaginary converge that demands our attention.



*Figure 1 From the cover of a brochure for the exhibit “Tenacity: Women in Jamestown and Early Virginia.” November 10, 2018-January 5, 2020. Jamestown Settlement.*

## 2 LANGUAGE, “PURITY,” AND POWER IN SOPHIA ALICE CALLAHAN’S WYNEMA AND PAULINE HOPKINS’ WINONA

### A National Lexicon: Race and Nation, 1850-1900

As Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) writes in *Transit of Empire*, "Despite all attempts to stave off Manichean dichotomies of 'authentic/inauthentic,' 'mixed/full,' 'hybrid/pure,' we are still caught in a Hegelian dialect of self/other that has already occurred through colonization" (141-142). These dichotomies have of course been no more rigorously regulated than by United States law, which has long sought to turn the specter of socially constructed race into an issue of “blood” rooted in the biological body and reflected in a national lexicon of racial “purity.” This national legal obsession with limning out African American and American Indian identity has and continues to have political motivations that center on capitalistic disenfranchisement: the infamous antebellum “one-drop” law kept Africans as enslaved capital and had implications long after emancipation, and tenuously defined blood quantum rations during allotment denied land and citizenship rights to American Indians based on arbitrary regulations designed by White lawmakers. However, these “Manichean dichotomies,” to borrow Byrd’s phrasing, and the capricious legislations of blood, are rooted in a primary national language of racial hierarchy that deals in complex, socially constructed terminology with long lineages of settler colonial origin, like “Black,” “White,” and “Indian,” but broadens to include terms like “Negro,” “Mestizo,” “Mustee,” “Mulatto/a,” “Octoroon,” “Quadroon,” “half-blood,” “full-blood,” “mixed-blood” (and the list goes on). The formation of this national lexicon has a long and storied history, but the motivation of its enforcement is perhaps the more compelling narrative: it serves a national imperative to codify socially constructed race and biologically-located “blood” in language, in order to establish a monomyth of U.S. racial “purity” and “authenticity.”



This legal obsession with racial codification is especially evident in nineteenth century legislation that attempts to grapple with Indian, African and White identities, both antebellum and in the aftermath of the Civil War and slavery, and was often in service of establishing both definitions of racial “purity” and maintaining an ineludible Black-White binary. As Jack Forbes (Powhatan-Renapé/ Delaware-Lenápe) notes in his seminal study on the language of race in the United States and red-black intersections, legal language produced in this era often recorded American Indians as “Black,” “persons of color,” or “Negro,” and allowed census enumerators, as key codifiers of the national racial lexicon, wide berth of interpretation (90-91). To list just a few of numerous examples, Forbes cites the 1856 “Black Code” of Louisiana, which included “slaves, Indians, and free persons of color” in the same category; the 1880 census in Nevada, which classified ninety members of the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe as “black,” and the frequent categorization in North Carolina of Lumbee Indians as “negroes” in the mid-nineteenth century (89-91). These examples indicate the tendency of U.S. legal bodies to align Indian identity with Black identity for reasons of disenfranchisement and to enforce a White-Black binary that also actively negates racial hybridity and multiplicity. As Tiya Miles notes, this practice has a clear motivation: “Whites stood to gain at the reduction of the Native American population. ‘Black’ people did not have the rightful claim to American land that Native people had. To define Indians as Black meant there would be fewer ‘real’ Indians with whom land deals and treaties had to be negotiated” (146). Indeed, the case of allotment, beginning in 1886 and continuing until the early 1900s, is perhaps the most significant example of this land disenfranchisement as tied intimately to language: former slaves, now enrolled as “Freedmen” citizens in the Five Civilized Tribes, were mostly “not allowed to assert American

ancestry and were, therefore, denied future rights as “Indians” (Forbes 89).<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of the racial policing inherent in controlling the body politic, African ancestry became an inhibitor of State-sanctioned Indian identity.<sup>6</sup> Despite a complicated national racial vocabulary that denoted varying degrees of Blackness, Indianness, Whiteness, and pejoratively coined Black/White hybridity (defined by legal Blackness), this overarching narrative of racial purity as codified by legislation in the nineteenth century enforced the general idea that all identities must lay somewhere on the White-Black spectrum. Intersectional identity—particularly Native/Black identity—was too threatening an intrusion to acknowledge, particularly considering its connection to land rights and broader issues of citizenship.

Pauline Hopkins, considered by many scholars to be the most prolific African American female writer at the turn of the nineteenth century, wrote four novels and numerous short stories, served as editor of the *Colored American Magazine*, and produced a substantial body of non-fiction work that focused on racial injustices in the Black community, the role of civic protest, and Black histories. Her third and least studied novel, *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest*, serialized in 1902, centers on a transcultural and transracial sister and brother pair, Winona and Judah, who are self-identified Seneca Indian, legally Black, and biologically/culturally White. Sophia Alice Callahan, a Muscogee Creek writer living in Indian Territory, published the first known novel written by an American Indian woman. A member of the “mixed-blood” Muscogee aristocracy, Callahan was well-educated in White-governed

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<sup>5</sup> Within each of the Five Civilized Nations, newly emancipated Freedmen also had difficulty gaining acceptance and citizenship. I will discuss the situation of Creek Freedmen later in this chapter.

<sup>6</sup> The issue of excluding Freedmen from Indigenous Nations and the rights of citizenship is by no means an historical issue only. In 2007, the Cherokee Nation voted to disenfranchise approximately 2,800 Cherokee Freedmen citizens, which violated an 1866 treaty with the United States that had given them their citizenship. A series of legal proceedings in the U.S. Court of Appeals culminated in 2017, when the U.S. District Court granted the Freedmen full rights to citizenship. See Jodi Byrd, “‘Been to the Nation, Lord, But I Couldn’t Stay There’: Cherokee Freedmen, Internal Colonialism, and the Racialization of Citizenship,” in *Transit of Empire*, University of Minnesota Press, 2011, pp. 117-146.

finishing schools and seminaries, and spent most of her short adult life teaching Creek children in schools and institutes around Creek Territory. Her only known work, *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*, published in 1891, centers a tract on the importance of assimilation and education for “full-bloods” with an “amalgamation” marriage plot, and includes various diatribes on women’s suffrage, allotment, and historical episodic reimaginations of Wounded Knee and Wokova’s Ghost Dance. While written in polar geographies and from disparate positionalities, an intersectional reading of these texts proves some grounds of similarity: both Hopkins and Callahan were writing with “racial uplift” in mind (although the extent to which they achieve this is, of course, questionable), both were attempting to recover transformative periods in racially-charged history (in the case of Callahan, Wounded Knee, and in the case of Hopkins, the antebellum John Brown and Bleeding Kansas insurrections), and both were explicitly attempting to turn their novels into activist tracts that would motivate civic action, and, in the case of Hopkins, provide precedence for organized rebellion against racial oppression.

Most importantly, both Hopkins’ and Callahan’s novels represent stratum of racialized language that governed nineteenth and turn-of-the-century hierarchies of “Indian,” “Black,” and “White” in the American imaginary at a pivotal time in United States history, particularly in light of policies legislating American Indian and African American identity, citizenship, and land rights and advocating for a master narrative of racial “purity” and the exclusion of hybridity that did not benefit the capitalistic ventures of the Nation-State. Probing this imaginary space demonstrates that one of the enduring legacies of historical African slavery as a result of settler colonial power structures is a system of powerful and deeply racialized state-sanctioned language that sought to create impermeable racialized categories of “Indian,” “Black,” and “White,” and yet in practice produced a hybridity and complex intersectionality that undermines the very

categories of purity and authenticity it sought to establish. I argue that both Hopkins and Callahan use the imaginary racial categorization of the “Other” to define the “Self”—although in radically different ways. Callahan problematically omits the long history of Creek multiracial hybridity as a byproduct of African slavery, and through a rhetorical mimesis of White women suffragists writing in the same era, instead creates a world that operates on a staunch Indian/White binary. The two moments in the text when Callahan mentions Blackness/Black Creek<sup>7</sup> Indian identity serve as marginal structuring presences that only enforce the racial hierarchy Callahan has created of “half-bloods,” “full-bloods,” and Whites and her ultimate racial fantasy of amalgamation and the disappearance of the “full-blood” that echoes White assimilationist discourse of the late nineteenth century. Hopkins alternately creates a transcultural, transracial cast of characters, who transcend legal and scientific categories of race and instead embrace a cultural, biological, and geographical hybridity. At the same time, however, Hopkins uses late nineteenth century notions of Indianness<sup>8</sup> and the “noble savage” stereotype to suggest that her characters’ cultural Seneca identity is the source of their spiritual connection to the land and their capacity for rebellion against White oppression. In other words, Hopkins’ suggests that performing a culturally learned Indianness can move Blackness outside the definitional and legal structures of White cognizance, and serve as a catalyst for organized civic resistance.

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<sup>7</sup> I use three different terms in my discussion of Black presence in Creek Territory/the Creek Nation: Freedmen (previously enslaved Black people), Black Creeks (Creeks who have been “granted” citizenship by the Creek Nation, either previously enslaved or not) and Black people in Creek Territory (Blacks who lived in Creek Territory but were neither previously enslaved nor were accepted as citizens by the Creek Nation). This is a slippery linguistic slope, as identity policing within the Creek Nation—and Blackness—is controversial. See David Chang, *Race, Nation and the Politics of Land Ownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929*. University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> The term “Indianness” refers to social and cultural conceptions of what it means to be Indian, which are historically situated—without regard for the lived experiences of actual American Indian people. See Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, Yale UP, 1998.

In an era obsessed with the color line, and in a period pivotal to the development of a national lexicon regarding race and identity, Hopkins' and Callahan's texts project the possibility—and impossibility— of intersectional terrain within imaginary spaces: geographic, rhetorical, linguistic, political, legal, and deeply rooted in shifting conceptions of identity, race, and gender. Their texts also illuminate late nineteenth and early twentieth century understandings of Black and Native historical intersectionality through the way they employ, challenge, subvert, problematize, and affirm a national lexicon and rhetoric of racial purity that works to erase Indigenous presence, obscure hybrid and multiple identities that do not serve the Nation-State, and conflate non-White histories into a single, totalizing narrative.

### ***Wynema: A Tragedy of Omission***

Sophia Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest* focuses initially on the education of Wynema Harjo, a "full-blood" Creek girl (although the word "Creek" is never mentioned in the text)<sup>9</sup>, who moves from uneducated "savage" speaking in an incomprehensible dialect to eloquent mimetic White woman under the tutelage of Genevieve Weir, a White Southern teacher who comes to the village to start a school for Indian children. Despite the novel's title, Genevieve is the true heroine of the narrative, and Gerald Keithly (whom Genevieve later marries), a missionary sent by the Methodist assembly, is the hero. After Wynema's education and transformation is complete, she manages to capture the heart of Robin Weir, Genevieve's brother, and there is a double wedding and the birth of two children: one child for Genevieve and Gerald, and one child for Wynema and Robin. This seems to be a natural end for the novel, but

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<sup>9</sup> Although the word "Creek" is never mentioned in the text, Callahan does make several references to Creek cultural specificities: sofke, a Creek food, the name Harjo, etc. (18, 36). Her deliberate cultural misrepresentations include representing Creeks as living in tepees—the Creeks never did— can only be interpreted as a deliberate pandering to the pan-Indian appetites of a White audience (5).

Callahan tacks on a series of episodic historical reimaginings: the murder of Sitting Bull, the massacre of the Sioux told from a woman's perspective, and a mention of Wokova's Ghost Dance. The novel is interrupted periodically with socio-political conversations between characters regarding some of the issues of Callahan's historical moment: allotment (the Dawes Act was passed in 1887, although the Creek did not allot until 1893), (White) women's suffrage, and the starvation of the Sioux by the United States Government, proving Callahan's engagement and familiarity with current events.

Callahan's novel was published twice—once in June of 1891 by the Chicago based H.J. Smith and Company, and again in 1893 by another Chicago company, E. A. Weeks and Company (Rude 118). Both publications were met with no critical reception, aside from a single oblique printing notice in the Creek Territory's *Our Brother in Red*. The novel itself is problematic, conflicted, and full of tensions and omissions—even the publisher, in a brief preface, apologizes for “what literary critics may term the crudeness or the incompleteness of the work” (ix). Creek scholar Craig Womack has called the novel “a document of Christian supremacism and assimilation,” and has gone on to argue that it does not deserve the title of a “Creek” text due to its “erasure of Creek voices, the character's rejection of Creek culture, the many instances of cultural misrepresentation throughout, the lack of any depictions of the nuances of Creek life, the protagonists repudiation of Muskogean matrilinearity, and the author's choice of a non-Creek and non-Indian viewpoint” (107). To be fair, Callahan did not have many models for what she ultimately attempted—the first known novel by a woman of mixed Native/European descent, educated in White institutions, writing in a culturally hybrid late nineteenth century Creek community, to an obviously white audience, and convinced that her novel would become a socio-political tract that would “open the eyes and heart of the world” to

the afflictions of “the Indian tribes of North America” (Callahan, Author’s Note). However, what makes Callahan’s novel so problematic is the extent to which it uncritically adopts late nineteenth century White assimilationist discourse concerning “full-blood” women: through Euro-centric education practices, through marriages of “amalgamation” that would eventually disappear “the Indian” altogether, and through the espousal of the idea that through close and intimate relationships with White sympathizers, even the “savage” and traditional “teepee” Indian can be civilized and parity with the White cult of True Womanhood can be at least artificially attained.<sup>10</sup> The racial hierarchy Callahan establishes in the text—Whiteness as superior and aligned with part/half bloods; and full-bloods occupying the very bottom tier and aligned with her brief mentions of Black identities, is one of staunch binaries. This is also what makes Callahan’s novel—despite its lack of models and positionality in the “canon” of American Indian novels—so incomprehensible: Callahan fundamentally ignores the Creek Nation’s historic and contemporary racial and cultural hybridity and instead creates a binary world dominated by the ideologies of Whiteness, biologically rooted “blood”, and pan-Indianness.

### **A White/Indian Binary and the Language of Women’s Suffrage**

The binary of Whiteness/Indianness that Callahan creates generally follows the pattern of White women’s reform literature concerning “the Indian” written in the nineteenth century: evocative of the reform literature of Lydia Maria Child and Helen Hunt Jackson, Callahan also imagines “the Indian”—disparate from the author—as an object of advocacy. Callahan’s

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<sup>10</sup> The paragon of “True Womanhood” in the late nineteenth century—often celebrated in women’s writing as an embrace of the four cardinal virtues of piety, domesticity, sexual and moral purity, and submissiveness to patriarchal values—is, of course, deeply racialized and classed. Claudia Tate has argued for the ways Black women writers at the turn of the century both used and subverted this ideal to create narratives of social reform. Less critical attention has been paid to Indigenous women’s writing and the domestic novel. See Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire*, Oxford University Press, 1996.

genealogy of female characters is comprised of Genevieve Weir, the White female “savior” who comes to civilize the “savage” through the process of education; Wynema, a “full-blood” who begins the novel speaking in incomprehensible dialect and then becomes a mimetic version of True White Womanhood under Genevieve’s careful tutelage; and little Genevieve, the “half-blood” product of Wynema and Robin’s union, a “brown-eyed gold-haired girl” who represents the amalgamative futurity of the text as a whole (76). Callahan’s mixed-blood “Gerlie” echoes Thomas Jefferson’s dream of Indian/White amalgamation that he ultimately envisioned as the end to the Indian problem: in 1808, to a Delegation of Delawares and Mohicans visiting Washington, Jefferson said “...you will mix with us by marriage, your blood will run in our veins, and will spread with us over this great Island.” His remedial vision was (to him) simple: “And we shall all be Americans.” Callahan reaffirms this binary in the final lines of the novel: “The seer withdraws her gaze and looks once more on the happy families nestling in the villages, near together. There they are, the Caucasian and American, the white and the Indian...” (104). Callahan’s binary world allows room for no multiplicity, and aside for a few moments of rupture, her paradigm remains intact.

It is important to note that Callahan’s exclusionary binary is structured mimetically around the rhetorical discourse of White women suffrage leaders active at the end of the nineteenth century. Callahan uses the language of movement leaders to, in the words of Anna Howard Shaw, have the “white woman do for the Indian what the Indian woman did for the white man.”<sup>11</sup> In reference to the Pocahontas/John Smith salvation myth (a favorite on the 1880s suffragist talking circuit), Shaw suggests that only White women have the power to truly “save” the Indian from destructive forces that threaten their existence and survival, and therefore must

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<sup>11</sup> “Indians versus Women,” *The Women’s Tribune*, Saturday, May 9, 1891.



take the reform movement into their own hands. This is something the White women's suffrage movement took seriously, at least in terms of rhetorical engagement: as Gail H. Landsman has outlined, references to Indians and Indian affairs abound in late nineteenth century speeches by Shaw, writings by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and texts written by Susan B. Anthony (249).

Callahan's novel directly mirrors suffragist concerns for Indian communities at the historical moment of her novel, both rhetorically and symbolically, particularly in the last section, which is detached from the overarching marriage plot, and moves geographically without explanation to Sioux Territory. Her seemingly tacked-on address of Wounded Knee and the graphic imagery of dead "papooses" on the breasts of their mothers frequently circulated on both the suffragist talking circuit and in Callahan's reimagined depiction of the battle scene; Callahan's mention of Wokova's Ghost Dance and its role in Indian communities also featured heavily in suffragist speeches defending the rights of "Indians," and the rhetoric of an innate, inborn freedom in women—another device frequently employed in suffragist speeches—is voiced in the novel through Wynema herself.<sup>12</sup> Callahan's explicit discussion of women's suffrage is also worth mentioning, as is her brief discussion of notoriously controversial (and racist) temperance movement leader Frances Williard.<sup>13</sup> This evidence suggests that Callahan's

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<sup>12</sup> The most famous example of this rhetoric is in Anna Howard Shaw's address, "Indians versus Women," to the National American Woman Suffrage Convention at Washington in February of 1891. There are remarkable similarities between Callahan's novel and Shaw's speech. Callahan's novel was published in June of the same year. Shaw's speech was published and discussed in various outlets; for the full version, see *The Women's Tribune*, Saturday, May 9, 1891.

<sup>13</sup> Williard had a long record of anti-Black rhetoric, but none so condemning as in an interview she gave to British newspaper *The Voice* in 1890. In the widely-circulated interview, Williard suggested that lynching was a solution to safeguard white women, children, and families from the drinking and uncontrollable violence of Black men. Willard stated, "The safety of women, of childhood, of the home, is menaced in a thousand localities at this moment so that men dare not go beyond the sight of their own roof-tree." It isn't clear how these sentiments line up with Callahan's own politics, but her inclusion of Williard as a heroine of the temperance and suffrage movement is curious. See Frances E. Williard, "The Race Problem: Miss Willard on the Political Puzzle of the South," *The Voice*, October 23, 1890.

novel must be fundamentally read as a tract directly influenced by White suffragist rhetoric on race and hierarchy, as well as Indian reform and the positionality of White women. Callahan's rhetorical mimesis also explains, at least in part, some of her glaring omissions of Creek racial multiplicity and complexity and her deliberate cultural misrepresentations: her civic activism was aligned with a reform movement patronizingly altruistic in its concerns for "Indian" communities.

In what may be a deliberate use of her authorial positionality, however, Callahan makes Wynema, a full-blood Creek, the voice of White women's suffrage in her most explicit discussions of the movement. This is, in some ways, the ultimate alignment of Indian-as-symbol and White women's suffrage: Callahan turns the rhetorical device of "Indian" into mouthpiece for the cause. Her text thus becomes a triple voiced discourse: the overarching voice of white women's suffrage; the mimetic/White supportive voice of the "full-blood," and Callahan's own voice as a "mixed-blood" Muscogee woman negotiating lived experience. Wynema begins by asserting in a casual conversation with Robin that "the women of my country have no voice in the councils; we do not speak in any public gathering, not even in our churches," and goes on to say that "we are waiting for our more civilized white sisters to gain their liberty, and thus set us an example which we shall not be slow to follow" (45). Craig Womack has already critiqued Callahan's dubious representation of gendered Creek socio-political life, but what is even more compelling is the way Wynema politely and meekly defaults to the concerns and desires of her "white sisters" in the valiant fight for equality and justice, placing Indian rights below White women's rights. Callahan's strategy here, however, seems pointed—by using Wynema to voice traditional arguments about women's suffrage in the style of Anna Howard Shaw, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony—and to further allow Wynema an avowal that she has not

merely “imbibed” those ideas from Genevieve—Callahan aligns the concerns of gendered full-blood citizenship with those of White women, and in the direct voice of a full-blood. Wynema goes on to proclaim: “the idea of freedom and liberty was born in me,” echoing natural rights arguments at the heart of mid-nineteenth century White suffragist rhetoric that emphasized women’s common humanity at the heart of voting rights (45). Callahan’s use of language like “freedom” and “liberty” in the context of a conversation about suffrage, however, also implicitly evokes another rhetorical strategy at the heart of suffragist propaganda: the idea that woman without a vote is deprived of a natural right and is therefore a slave. In the *History of Woman’s Suffrage*, edited by Stanton and Anthony, this rhetorical language abounds: “If American men intend to keep women slaves political and civil, they make a great mistake when they let the girl, with the boy, learn the alphabet, for no educated class will remain in subjection” (44). In the Senate Minority Report submitted by Senators Brown and Cockerell, Anthony and Stanton record that “this right [of voting] makes all the difference between government by and with the consent of the governed; and that is the difference between freedom and slavery. If the right to vote be not that difference, what is it?” (90). In a Dawes era preoccupied with connecting Indian identity and citizenship to landownership, Callahan—perhaps radically—has a “full-blood” female Indian voice suggest that the ability to decide one’s political and legal future through voting is connected to freedom and liberty instead. Of course, this suggests acknowledgement and participation as a United States citizen and not as a member of a sovereign Creek Nation—again aligning Callahan’s ideology with White discourse—and so Callahan’s radicalism is exercised within the limitations of its own worldview.

Callahan again engages a cacophony of voices and racializes her categorization of “Indian”—albeit briefly—in her explicit discussion of allotment. In one of her only explicit

delineations between “full-bloods” and “half-bloods” in the novel, Callahan outlines allotment through a conversation between Genevieve and Gerald as desirable to the more educated and white-associated “part-bloods”—and indicates that “it would be the ruin of the poor ignorant full-bloods” (51). Callahan additionally frames Wynema—albeit briefly until she is enlightened by Genevieve’s superior anti-allotment point of view—as a pro-allotment voice in the novel, calling her own people “lazy Indians” who “do nothing but hunt and fish” and do not cultivate the land (51). As David Chang notes in his history of race and the Creek Nation, most “full-bloods” in the late nineteenth century were considered to be “traditional” and were thus opposed to allotment, in addition to impending statehood. In actuality, the socio-political situation in Creek territory was much more complicated: as is so often the case, “ancestry did not correlate so neatly with political beliefs” (87). In this sense, Callahan’s framing of initial efforts towards allotment as a hierarchical racial issue, and her voicing of pro-allotment propaganda as popularly circulated by both the Dawes Commission and newspapers in the voice of a character understood to be a “traditional full-blood,” complicates the allotment-era Creek Nation socio-political landscape. Members of the Commission advertised allotment as a protection of “full-bloods” and their land rights from well-educated and wealthy “mixed-bloods” and white “boomers” who were encroaching on their land.<sup>14</sup> Callahan gives voice to “full-blood” pro-allotment stances here—in the voice of a “full-blood,” no less—but then attempts a rhetorical maneuver by converting Wynema to Genevieve’s anti-allotment stance because it takes away freedom of choice, nearly guarantees statehood, forces Indians to become US citizens, and “will be the ruin of the poor, ignorant savage” (52). Genevieve argues that “the North American Indian” cannot

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<sup>14</sup> This sentiment was widespread, both during the initial allotment campaign in 1887, and just before the Curtis Act of 1898. See “An Address from the Commissioners to the Citizens of the Five Civilized Tribes—They Say That a Change Must Be Made,” *Eufaula Indian Journal*, February 15, 1894.

become “a fit subject of the United States” because “the Western tribes are not sufficiently tutored in the school of civilization,” to which Wynema responds: “What a superficial thinker I am not to have understood this!” (52). In this sense, Callahan’s stance on allotment is complicated: she makes allotment a racial issue—which also motivated the Dawes commission—and yet for different ends. The fact that Wynema requires White intervention in order to understand her precarious fate under the auspices of allotment is suspect, making allotment even more racialized under a hierarchy of cognizance.

Callahan’s text ultimately labors under the rhetorical grip of a deeply racialized and exclusionary White suffragist discourse, which she attempts to tailor to a pan-Indian positionality and align with both literal and metaphoric Indian voice, however problematically. While Callahan shifts the voice of the speaker, she does not shift the lexicon, and thus the discourse remains deeply racialized, exclusionary, and firmly entrenched in settler colonial definitions of Indianness and Whiteness as tied irrevocably to symbolic systems of order.

### **A Hybrid Nation**

As a self-proclaimed activist tract, dedicated by the author to “the Indian tribes of North America who have felt the wrongs and oppression of their pale-faced brothers,” Callahan problematically omits the long and complex history of Creek multiracial and multicultural identity. Interestingly, as Susan Bernardin has also noted, Callahan mentions in the last line of her introduction the hope that her novel “issue[s] into existence an era of good feeling and just dealing towards us and our more oppressed brothers.” Whether this line refers to Black Creeks and their increasing marginalization and disenfranchisement by Creek communities in Callahan’s era, as Bernardin suggests, or indicates that Callahan recognizes her privilege as a member of the

“mixed-blood” community and thus excises herself from the “oppressed,” it does not adequately explain her cultural misrepresentation and gross omission of Creek multiplicity.

The long history of socially constructed race in the Creek Nation is complicated—as one of the Five Civilized Tribes, the Creeks were introduced to both the ideologies of racial difference and Euro-centric systems of slavery in the eighteenth century. Andrew K. Frank describes the “nonracial understanding” of the boundary between Creeks and others that eighteenth and early nineteenth century Creeks generally held to be true. He goes on to detail early Creek contact with the ideas of race and the language of “blood” through colonial interactions—prior to contact “Creeks—of various villages, clans, and cultural dispositions—routinely adopted, incorporated, and accepted the Creek identities of Africans and European Americans (129). Contact with Eurocentric racialized hierarchies, however, led to conflicted bias and prejudices, and the Creek were one of the Five Civilized Tribes to adopt the plantation system of slavery in the 1700s.<sup>15</sup> As evidence of growing racial tension and increased Black presence in Creek Territory, the Creek Citizenship Law of 1859 legally denoted the differences between Creek and Black, slave and free and read much like the slave codes in the Southern States (Chang 34). Shortly afterwards, an 1866 treaty granted citizenship to freed slaves, making race an even more significant issue in the Creek Nation (55). Former Creek slaves were now Creek voters, and formed all Black towns—more than fifty that are identified, between 1865 and 1920—as communities providing economic security and protection to Black citizens. It is important to note that this kind of inclusion of Blacks as separate, self-governing communities

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<sup>15</sup> The history of slavery among the Creek in the eighteenth century, settler colonial influence, and the emergence of the Seminole is complex. See Claudio Saunt “‘The English Has Now a Mind to Make Slaves of Them All’: Creeks, Seminoles, and the Problems of Slavery” in *Confounding the Color Line*, University of Nebraska Press, 2002, pp. 47-75.

did not occur within the other slave-holding Five Civilized Tribes—particularly the Cherokee. The situation in the Creek Nation, in other words, was singular.

And yet as the nineteenth century progressed, there was continued debate about the positionality of Black Creeks in Creek society. As David Chang describes, free Black Creeks had been part of Creek society both before and during the days of slavery, however, after Emancipation, non-African Creeks applied the term "Freedmen" to all Black Creeks, thus relegating them to the "status of freed slaves and descendants of slaves. They thereby erased the free Creeks of African descent from the history of the Creek nation and remapped its racial boundaries" (82). While some Creeks accepted this new idea of a multicultural, multiracial nation, others saw it as problematic: in November of 1881, newspapers in Creek Territory warned that current racist sentiments could lead to a "race war between full-blood Creeks and negroes" (Chang 65). The status of Black Creeks in the Nation was enough of an issue that Isparhecher, the leader of the National Party, when he was running for principal chief in 1883, wrote in a letter accepting his nomination that "Every Muskogee citizen, whether his skin be red, white, or black, has equal rights and privileges in this nation, and the most abject, poor, and ignorant, is entitled to equal consideration with the most distinguished, rich and learned at the hands of our officers" (67-68).<sup>16</sup> Isparhecher's clear establishment of a tri-part racial identity at the heart of the Creek Nation is significant, and is further evidenced by numerical data: the census of 1890 recorded 3,289 whites, 4,621 blacks, and 9,999 Indians.<sup>17</sup> In the summer of 1891,

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<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that Isparhecher won the election—largely due to overwhelming support, as David Chang records, from Black Creeks and interracial citizens of the Nation. It is also worth noting that Callahan's father, professional abbreviation S.B. Callahan, was Isparhecher's private secretary at the time of his election, and typed (and likely translated) the letter "To the Honorable Members of the National Council" accepting Isparhecher's nomination. See *The Indian Journal*, January 3, 1884.

<sup>17</sup> The legacy of census taking in Indigenous communities was—and continues to be—fraught with the tensions of identity policing and adherence to narratives of racial "purity." In the 1890 census, some Creeks and Black Creeks resisted White census enumerators because they knew the census was tied to the allotment initiative. This resistance was significant enough to be recorded in the extra-census bulletin about the Indian Territory. For more on the census

Isparhecher was nominated as principal chief of the Creek Nation by the National Party again, and in a letter to the Chairman of the National Party, declares a sentiment that echoes his from 1883: "I will recognize all people as equals, whether red, white, or black." It is clear that this composite, multiracial Creek Nation was still built on a potential hierarchy of difference—it is no coincidence that Isparhecher lists the "races" in the order that he does—but the fact that Creek leadership was at least publically attempting to come to terms with the multiplicity of a nation is evidence that nineteenth century Creek society was concerned with its evolving identity.

Prominent and well-published Creek writers were also addressing race and the nation in print, perhaps none so controversially as Alexander Posey—one of the most widely read writers in Creek Territory in Callahan's era. His "Uncle Dick" stories, published in the 1880s and 1890s, satirized the dialect, appearance, and personas of African freedmen, depicting their character as ignorant, lazy, and dishonest (Sivils 20). His *Fus Fixico* letters, published from 1902 to 1908, were written in the voice of a fictional full-blood Creek who commented, in exaggerated dialect, on the multiplicity of life in Indian Territory and early twentieth century Indian policy at the hands of the United States government—including pointed commentary on race.<sup>18</sup>

It is impossible that Callahan was unaware of the racial politics in her own Nation, despite her status as Muskogean aristocracy. Her awareness of allotment, (white) women's suffrage, and current events both inside and outside Indian Territory—and her inclusion of those discussions in the text of *Wynema*—are evidence of her socio-political

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of 1890, including collected data with analysis, see Katja May, *African Americans and Native Americans in the Creek and Cherokee Nations, 1830s to 1920s: Collisions and Collusions*. Garland Publishing, 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Posey's anti-Black rhetoric transcended his Uncle Dick stories. He also bitterly attacked Legus Perryman, a prominent Creek citizen running for principal chief in 1903 in the *Indian Journal*. It was well known in the Creek community that Perryman had "African blood" from a supposedly distant relative, and while this connection largely did not affect Perryman's standing in the community, it did occasionally invite anti-Black commentary. Posey wrote in regards to his nomination: "All that we are able to say is that he is a nigger and a bad one at that." See Matthew Wynn Sivils, *Chinnubie and the Owl*. University of Nebraska Press, 2005, p. 20.



awareness. Callahan's father, as A. Lavonne Brown Ruoff notes in her brief biographical introduction to *Wynema*, Samuel Benton Callahan, was active in Muskogean politics, served as the editor for *The Indian Journal* in Muskogee, and was secretary to three principal chiefs: Isparhecher, Roly McIntosh, and Samuel Chechote. While Sophia Alice Callahan did spend her childhood in Sulphur Springs, Texas, she later taught in Okmulgee and Muskogee within a segregated school system, and would have been well-aware of racial tensions at work within Indian Territory, and the ideologies of the predominately White and Indian children under her tutelage.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, this makes the binary world of Indianness and Whiteness that Callahan creates in *Wynema* a deliberate act—an adoption of White discourse concerning assimilative and amalgamative practices that echoes Jeffersonian ideologies concerning the civilization of the “savage.” Callahan's omission of Black and hybrid identities—and omission of any explicit mention of a legacy of slavery—is worth considering in a text that has self-associated with civic—albeit generic—activism. Callahan's participation in White discourse is clear, and one might assume she has perhaps imbibed the racist rhetoric of Genevieve's idol Frances Williard, but the goal of Callahan's deliberate cultural misrepresentation and omission is more difficult to ascertain. An answer may be in the momentary ruptures in the text where the brief mention of Blackness threatens to derail Callahan's carefully constructed rhetorical binary from the margins, and serves as a structuring presence that realigns part of the text's racial hierarchy.

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<sup>19</sup> Per A. Lavonne Ruoff's biographical notes, Callahan spent 1892 and 1893 teaching at Wealaka, a boarding school for Muskogee children. Wealaka was built in 1880 to replace the burned Tullahassee Mission, which was a school for “full-blood” and “mixed-blood” Indians, but was then ceded in its half-destroyed state to Black Creeks as part of the Creek Nation's segregated school system. It became the Tullahassee Manual Labor School, and operated until 1906. Despite attempts to keep the school system segregated, school records indicate that prominent families with known Black connections like the Perrymans attended Wealaka. See *The Church at Home and Abroad*, 1880.

## Blackness on the Margins

Callahan's most significant rupture is in the scene where Genevieve's brother Robin professes his desire to marry Wynema. Wynema almost falls out of a tree before responding: "Robin, what would our parents say? Would your mother accept a little black Indian for a daughter?" Robin catches her before she falls, and admonishes her by saying: "My sweetheart must not call herself names." He goes on to say, "Come and let's tell them all about it, now, and we can soon decide that point" (62-63). Notably, Wynema seems to fear the response of both sets of parents to this interracial and intercultural marriage, although it is worth noting that Creek/White marriages were not uncommon in Callahan's era—but it is Robin's parents who would be concerned, from Wynema's perspective, at least, about the darkness of her skin and her Indian nationality. Susan Bernardin has suggested that Robin's response "registers the text's refusal of a racial affiliation too threatening to its narrative invocation of an interracial national community" (217). Indeed, Robin's response identifies Wynema's demarcation of "black" as a perceived slur—however, the dual meaning of "black" as both a reference to physiognomy and a reference to socially constructed race within the contested multiracial geography of the Creek Nation is also acknowledged in Robin's language. As Jack Forbes has noted, in the nineteenth century, the word "black", like "negro," was synonymous with enslavement (84). Wynema's slur against her own identity—her own full-blood Creek identity, is also suggestive of a legacy of enslavement, and therefore threatens the very foundations of her Self as "Indian." Wynema thus aligns her status as a full-blood Indian with Blackness—a Blackness that Callahan cannot confront explicitly in her narrative, but allows momentary rupture here—and suggests her union to the pale and fair Robin as the antidote. This union, an amalgamative fantasy of White/Indian domesticity that will birth a mixed-race child, will also serve as the vehicle that will ultimately

disappear the “full-blood”—will remediate any traces of “black”— and solve the “Indian problem.”

Later in the conversation, as Wynema and Robin continue to discuss how they will tell their parents, Wynema says: “but I fear your mother may care, and I should feel criminal to think I had come down here and stolen you away like a wolf steals away a lamb” (63). Callahan may be alluding to Aesop’s famous fable here, however this further association of Wynema’s full-blood identity/physiognomic Blackness with the qualities of a thieving wolf (and Robin, in turn, with the harmless innocence of a lamb) further solidifies her connection with cultural depictions of Creek Freedmen in Callahan’s era, particularly those of Posey. It also establishes Blackness and Indianness as a perceived threat to Whiteness, and alludes to era-specific, White-generated fears concerning miscegenation.

The only other explicit mention of Black identity in the text is in a scene between Genevieve and her doomed suitor, Maurice Mauran. Early in the novel, Genevieve is pledged to marry Maurice, but finding out through conversation that he is anti-Indian and anti-women, Genevieve tells him off passionately before committing herself to the pious Gerald Keithly. In an incendiary conversation loosely about allotment, but more so about Maurice’s desire for Genevieve to give up her post amongst the Indians because of their “idle, trifling” nature, return to the South, and marry him, he makes a long argument against the suitability of the Indians as living companions, claiming that they are “uncouth savages,” “nothing more than a brute,” with less sense than a dog, “not worth spending time and money on,” and “a people whom no amount of cultivation could civilize” (54, 55). He goes on to say that they are “a people very little superior to the negro,” and rehearses his fantasy of Genevieve abandoning her teaching position to live with him in domestic bliss (55). His litany of abuses against Indians leaves little room for

one to imagine what he thinks of “the negro”—whom he places at the very bottom of his imaginary racial hierarchy. Genevieve’s ensuing response to Maurice’s racial rhetoric is one of impassioned and righteous anger, and she attacks both his masculinity and his capacities of reason—but she does not, rather notably, refute his hierarchies. She responds by proclaiming “You say I have disgraced myself by laboring among the ignorant, idle, treacherous Indians; but never in all the years I have dwelt among these savages have I been subjected to the insult your words imply” (56). Genevieve’s failure of response here is the same as Robin’s to Wynema’s mention of Blackness: Genevieve is incapable of recognizing and naming a national identity that threatens the White/Indian binary so central to the assimilation/civilization tract at the heart of her own personal agenda. As in the white suffragist rhetoric so central to the rest of the narrative (as in Callahan’s historical moment), Blackness is not a constructive or meaningful piece of the conversation.<sup>20</sup>

Callahan’s seemingly tacked-on ending, which reimagines the massacre at Wounded Knee from a woman-centered perspective, the first in fiction, is, as Lisa Tatonetti argues, also full of historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations (12-15). Despite Callahan’s lack of models and her precedence in the “canon” of American Indian literature, it is difficult not to see her text as a White-aligned tract in pan-Indian reform. Its most radical contribution to the racial imaginary is to restrict Blackness to the unspeakable margins in order to create and elevate a White/Indian binary and replicate the model of the exclusive nation-state: this binary, according to Callahan, will become an amalgamation, and serves as the key to civic progress.

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<sup>20</sup>Black women’s voices were famously excluded from the fight for women’s suffrage. For a particularly compelling response to a White woman suffragist, see Anna Julia Cooper’s “Woman vs. The Indian” from 1891, written in response to Anna Howard Shaw’s speech from the National American Woman Suffrage Convention at Washington from February of 1891 titled “Indians versus Women” (previously noted).

### ***Winona: At the Intersection of Biology and Culture***

Serialized between May and October of 1902 in the *Colored American Magazine*, *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest* is Pauline Hopkins' third novel. Set in the 1850s, the novel begins with an introduction to the British White Eagle, an adopted refugee hiding in the Seneca Nation, his Black/White/Seneca-identified daughter, Winona, by an escaped slave, and his adopted Black/Seneca-identified son, Judah. After the arrival of the British lawyer Warren Maxwell to the island to find a missing man named Henry Carlingford, and White Eagle's mysterious murder, Judah and Winona are kidnapped under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and taken to a Missouri plantation. After many abuses, they are later rescued by Maxwell and his accomplices, who is himself later imprisoned by slave traders and rescued by Winona, dressed in the costume of a young boy. Towards the end of the novel, Judah, Winona, and Maxwell join the historic John Brown's anti-slavery militia in Kansas for a culminating duel with a pro-slavery camp, and in a twist of fate, Winona finds out the truth of her heritage: White Eagle's real name was Henry Carlingford, and he fled from England due to false murder charges. He had been framed by his evil cousin Titus, who not ironically became Winona and Judah's slave master in Missouri. Titus killed White Eagle in order to dissolve his claims on the family's ancestral estate. As a result of this information, Winona and Judah are pronounced heirs to the Carlingford fortune. As luck would have it, Maxwell and Winona have also fallen in love, and they depart for England with Judah, both escaping the Civil War and American "caste prejudice." Hopkins' often convoluted plot is preoccupied with ancestry, lineage, and inheritance, but also with transculturation, transnationalism, and the intersections of biology, culture, and what she terms "training." Of her four novels, *Winona* is the only one to mention

Native American presence—geographic or otherwise—and her only text to imagine that presence as intersecting an African American lineage of civic resistance.

In *Winona*, Hopkins creates a hybrid, transcultural cast of characters who are Black by law and Indian by choice and geographic/cultural association in order to resist and reconstruct racial categories as assigned by law and oppose the narrative of racial purity advocated by race science at the turn of the century. Through claiming cultural and geographic Native association and identity, Hopkins associates her characters with turn of the century conceptions of “Indianness”—in line with stereotypical notions of the “noble savage,” such as an innate and oftentimes spiritual connection to the land, a noble character in the face of white “progress,” a savage or uncivilized disposition, and an unwavering commitment to liberty and freedom. In this sense, Hopkins indicates that the Native American of the national imaginary “embodied the potential in Blacks themselves to disrupt social order and white civilization” and thus participate in organized resistance (Lovett 199). This is no more apparent than in Hopkins’ construction of Winona herself: largely due to her patrilineal and ancestral claim to England, the original site of colonial racial and gender logics, she becomes a triangulation of legally conflicting identities. She is White by ancestral heritage, Black by law, and Indian by choice. The very suggestion that someone like Winona could exist creates the possibility of a lineage of racial hybridity for African Americans and also raises compelling questions about the “nature vs. nurture” debate implicit in race science conversations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The conflict between biology, “blood,” geography, and culture had legal precedence in the late nineteenth century, and Hopkins may have been thinking about cases like *Homer Plessy’s*, and the ensuing debates about racial purity and scientific racism that the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court case brought to the forefront of American political conversation. In 1890, the

fair-skinned Homer Plessy was selected by a group of Black activists to challenge Jim Crow law regarding the segregation of passenger trains. Although Plessy appeared white, he was considered Black by Louisiana state law due to the fact that he had one Black great-grandparent. As Laura Lovett notes, Plessy's supporters—the same group who selected him to challenge Louisiana State law—intended for his ancestry to highlight the “impossibility of enacting legislation designed to separate races” (202). The Supreme Court's 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* effectively legalized racism, and affirmed the precedence of biology and “blood” as the determinant of legal status. Hopkins' suggestion in *Winona* that race could be connected to geography—where you are born and how you are “trained,” to borrow her phrasing—challenges dominate early twentieth century theories rooted in race science and notions of “racial purity,” and reinforced by law in cases like Homer Plessy's. At the same time, Hopkins' suggestion that geography can serve as the framework for self-identified Indian citizenship is problematic, particularly in an allotment era that sought to connect American Indian identity irrevocably to land ownership.

### **Intersecting Geographies**

It is clear that Hopkins is interested in the lineage of the historical Seneca land she chooses as the antebellum setting for *Winona*—Rochester, Buffalo, and the surrounding environs—from the perspective of African American history, and I argue that this progressive interracial lineage is a larger part of Hopkins' ultimate aim to create a hybrid Black/Indian intersectional ancestry. Hazel Carby argues for Hopkins' concern with creating an African American genealogy in her work, and personal imperative to resist Eurocentric narratives that “limited the possibilities of Black existence” (162). Colleen O'Brien notes the parallel Hopkins

draws in *Winona* between Indian Removal and contemporary voter legislation against African American voters in the “Southland,” noting that both groups had been “denied their land and their rights” (29). Similarly, I want to focus on Hopkins’ very specific choice of Western New York as both the beginning point of her novel and the geographic refuge of her racially hybrid cast of characters, and her nationally-specific choice of the Seneca Nation as both a geographic Indigenous territory and an identity with which to associate Winona, Judah, and White Eagle.

In the opening pages of the novel, Hopkins mentions the fact that Buffalo was “an antislavery stronghold, the last most convenient station of the underground railroad,” and goes on to note the pointed absence of slavery in the surrounding area, as compared to the “Southland” to which Winona and Judah will later be kidnapped (2). In actual history, Western New York also was the home of William Wells and Frederick Douglass, the publishing site of Douglass’ *North Star*, the seat of the National Association of Colored Women, the home of the Seneca County Anti-Slavery Society, the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society (of which Douglass was a member), and the site of the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848.<sup>21</sup> In other words, Hopkins has chosen a geographical location rife with African American anti-slavery history—and not coincidentally. As a result, Hopkins intersects Seneca geography with African American abolitionist history in order to create a hybrid imaginative landscape that draws power—and not unproblematically—from both. Hopkins’ interest in the Seneca as a culturally specific nation is marginal to their location in this landscape of hybrid history and their generic identity as “Indians”—in other words, the displacement of one “dark race,”<sup>22</sup> to borrow Hopkins’

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<sup>21</sup> The Seneca Falls Convention was the first women’s rights convention in the United States, and was attended predominately by White women. It was, however, famously attended by Douglass. His presence at the convention publically declared his support of women’s suffrage, Cady and Stanton, and aligned his fight against slavery with the fight for the vote.

<sup>22</sup> Hopkins published *The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century* in five installments in the *Voice of the Negro* between February and June of 1905. Her fifth installment is called the “North American Indian.”



problematic phrasing, led to the geographically contextualized civic activism of another. Her ensuing interest in the lineage of the land, and the intersectional ancestry of the antebellum moment she details in *Winona*, provides a backdrop for questioning colonial narratives of racial purity and the impossibility of transculturation.<sup>23</sup>

Hopkins chooses the historical Seneca Nation's tract of land strategically: as described in the novel, it is a border land, situated between Canada and America, crossed by the Niagara river, and further bounded by Lake Erie (1). When White Eagle wants to marry the "handsome well-educated mulattress who had escaped from slavery via the underground railroad," he crosses the Canadian shore in order to marry under English law and "with the sanction of the Church" (3). The land itself is thus a place of hybridity and transit, the meeting grounds of Native sovereignty, White law, and Black refuge from White law—or what Hopkins dismissively and sentimentally terms the "romantic happenings in this mixed community of Anglo-Saxons, Indians and Negroes" (1). This idea of Native land as a refuge, an escape from slavery, and, for Hopkins' contemporary era, a physical space that operates outside of legal racial segregation, was powerful both in the post-Reconstruction African American imaginary and in actual history. As David Chang notes, between 1890 and 1907, a large migration of African Americans came to Indian Territory, increasing the previous African American population over fourfold (91). These migrants came in order to escape White law, for economic reasons, or in order to find freedoms that did not exist in a post-Reconstruction South.

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<sup>23</sup> Hopkins could have made use of culturally specific texts on the Iroquois Confederacy and the Seneca had she wanted to—they existed in the early twentieth century print world, and they were surely accessible in Hopkins' very connected and literary Boston. I do not mean to suggest that any of these texts represent Seneca voices or cultural accuracy—and in fact, are rather White authored, colonial tracts that largely support further narratives of disenfranchisement. But they existed. See Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Notes on the Iroquois*, Erastus H. Pease & Co., 1847.

The historical moment Hopkins' chooses to briefly mention at the beginning of the novel—the 1842 Third Treaty of Buffalo Creek, when the Seneca Nation sold the Buffalo Creek and Tonawanda reservations to the Ogden Company and partially removed to Kansas—situates her imaginary landscape just a few years after an incidence of removal. This history—noted in a single line by Hopkins in her opening pages—is secondary to the symbolic value of the vacated land post-Removal in Hopkins' imaginary. For Winona, the vacated border lands are a space characterized by freedom and peace, and the narrator notes that "in the primal life she had led there had entered not a thought of racial or social barriers" (89). When she returns to the same tract of land later in the novel, after having been enslaved, the primal quality of the land has the ability to return her to some version of her pre-enslavement self: "The woods calmed her, their grays and greens and interlacing density of stems, and their whisper of a secret that has lasted from the foundation of the world, replacing her fever with the calmness of hope" (89). According to Hopkins, something primeval and primal exists on unoccupied Native land, something approaching mysticism. Notably, actual Native people must be absent in order for this magic to occur—even Nokomis, White Eagle's housekeeper and the only biological Seneca in the text, has also disappeared without explanation at this point in the narrative. It is clear that Hopkins is more interested in post-Removal land as imaginary form—as backdrop for the possibilities of hybridity and transculturation—than she is in actually representing tribally specific people or Nations.

In a further intersection of revisionary Native and African American histories, Hopkins connects the Seneca's 1842 Removal with a further type of removal enacted both by the system of chattel slavery and the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. When Winona and Judah are captured by slave hunters sent by the previous owners of White Eagle's wife and Judah's mother after the

death of White Eagle, Hopkins invokes both the Fugitive Slave Act and matrilineal slave law: “the child follows the condition of the mother” (28).<sup>24</sup> Despite the fact that Winona and Judah have been born free, they are subject to a removal from the lands of their birth by White law, and are enslaved on a Missouri plantation – in the heart of the “Southlands.” In a further geographic progression, after their escape from slavery, Winona and Judah join the John Brown rebellion in Kansas—the “Southwest.” The culminating battle scene in the novel—when Winona, Judah, and Maxwell fight alongside John Brown and his camp—takes place in this geography, and is framed as the ultimate duel between North and South. Hazel Carby has argued that Hopkins’ inclusion of the historic John Brown and his abolitionist resistance to pro-slavery forces makes a powerful argument about the appropriateness of organized resistance to racial violence and discrimination in Hopkins’ own historical era (*Reconstructing* 154). At the same time, by centralizing and focusing on Brown’s abolitionist camp in Kansas—and his ultimate goal to have Kansas enter the Union as a free state—Hopkins returns her narrative to Native lands and follows the removal path of the Seneca. After the 1842 Third Treaty of Buffalo Creek, some Seneca removed to Kansas territory West of the Mississippi River (Seneca Nation of Indians).<sup>25</sup> Again, Hopkins intersects histories of Native American geographical displacement and African American

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<sup>24</sup> United States slave law depended on the rule of matrilineal descent for its perpetuation, effectively transforming the Black female body into a capitalistic, state-run enterprise. The Seneca Nation of Indians is based on matrilineal descent, connecting citizenship and national identity to the lineage of the mother. Although Hopkin’s pan-Indian representation of Seneca culture casts doubt on her awareness of this national specificity, the intersection is worth noting.

<sup>25</sup> I am rejecting here the single linear, monolithic narrative of “Removal” as an historical event that happened once, fully removed all Indigenous presence from a selected body of land, and began a new period of history “post-Removal.” Careful attention to Indigenous history—and the specific histories of individual Nations—tells a very different story, and “Removal” has instead been, much like settler colonialism, an ongoing violence with an active, ongoing resistance as its counterpart. In the case of the Seneca, the Treaty of Buffalo Creek in 1838 attempted to remove some Seneca to Kansas; some left, but most returned; a new Treaty of Buffalo Creek was signed in 1842 attempting to remove some Seneca again; some left, but most returned. This is only a brief fragment of the Seneca’s “Removal” story confined to the time frame addressed within Hopkins’ novel, but it serves as a terse reminder that even the notion of “Removal” is a settler colonial concept complicit with the notion of the “disappearing Indian” and geographic absence. For the Seneca’s story in their own words, see “Treaties,” <https://sni.org/culture/treaties/>, accessed 17 September 2019.

resistance to White social order and law, even going so far as to suggest that the two systems are connected in significant ways: one paves the way for the other. This suggestion, however, that Black resistance is predicated on Indigenous absence negates the possibilities for truly intersectional terrain—geographic, civic, or otherwise.

### **“But the girl puzzles me. What is she?”: Winona as Border-Crossing Racial Boundaries**

It is within the formation of Winona and Judah, the half-brother and sister pair raised by the British White Eagle on Seneca land as self-identified Seneca, that Hopkins raises the most compelling questions about the possibilities for intersectional identity and transculturation. Winona, more than any other of Hopkins’ characters, is able to transcend ethnic, racial, and gendered boundaries—she disrupts the prevalent social order, White inscribed legal definitions of identity, and the strict confines of gendered behavior.<sup>26</sup> Her appearance defies easy categorization: she is described as simultaneously having both “two long plaits of sunny hair” and a forehead “about which the hair clustered in rich dark rings” (3,5). She is also described as having a “slim brown hand,” an “olive complexion with a hint of pink,” and a “white throat” (2, 5, 72). It would be easy to dismiss these conflicts of physiognomy as tensions or slippages in Hopkins’ text—but they rather underscore the unification of varying shades of color in Winona’s person and her transgression of physiognomic codes. As a consequence, her body is not easily read by those outside her small cast of insiders—the white men early in the novel who come to her island and appraise her as a possible runaway slave are fairly certain of Judah’s identity as Black, but in regards to Winona they say: ““But the girl puzzles me. What is she?,” eventually

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<sup>26</sup> In another nod to the centrality of geography and the significance of border crossing in Hopkins’ novel, even Winona’s name is connected to the land. There is a town named “Winona” located roughly halfway between Buffalo and Ontario.

concluding that she is a “...nigger too, or I’ll eat my hat!” (8). Racial ambiguity in this case is read as Black, particularly when it benefits the plantation system of chattel slavery.

Winona is described within the confines of antebellum racialized slave law by Mr. Maybee, the novel’s purveyor of legal definitions of race, as a “quadroon:” her mother, as described by Hopkins in the beginning of the novel, was a “handsome well-educated mulattress who had escaped from slavery via the underground railroad” (3). Mr. Maybee goes on to characterize both Winona and Judah as “Injin-niggers,” a combination of identities that, in his definition at least, acts as a double subjugation which encompasses the possibilities of enslavement, an immutable place on the bottom tiers of racial hierarchy, and perpetual geographic displacement (24). Her racial identity is then complex: she is a “quadroon” by White legal standards, although this of course translates to an immutable Blackness in service of the nation-state, and yet to the local Black community, she is doubly marginalized as Indian, a category which exists, for the novel at least, outside the confines of Black understanding.

It is worth noting that Hopkins’ depictions of Winona as self-identified Indian veer into nineteenth century “noble savage” stereotypes in two important ways: Winona is frequently described as a queen and a princess, regal in her carriage and bearing, underscoring the oft-repeated myth of gendered Native royalty (3, 54, 72, 89). Hopkins’ use of the word “squaw” also conforms to late nineteenth century gendered language of the Indian imaginary: John Brown calls Winona “the ‘pretty squaw,’” and Hopkins uses the term repeatedly throughout the text to refer to Indian women (88, 2, 5). As Rayna Green argues, these two mythological images of Indian women are bound to the American imagination in complicated ways—the Mother-Queen, drawn from a nation obsessed with the history-turned-mythology of Pocahontas, and what Green terms her “dark-side,” the “savage Squaw” (703). According to Green’s argument, both “parts”

are defined by their relationships with White men, and the Mother-Goddess-Queen must “be a partner and lover of Indian men, a mother to Indian children, and an object of lust to white men,” and in order to retain her title of “Princess,” she must sacrificially rescue these same men from danger (703). It is the Squaw, Green continues, who actually satisfies the White man’s lust, however, as they “share in the same vices attributed to Indian men—drunkenness, stupidity, thievery, venality of every kind” (711). As Joann Paveltich’s study of the tragic mulatta figure in Hopkins’ four novels has shown, *Winona* is unique in that it depicts its heroine as both connected to “the physical agency of intense action and the emotional agency of eroticized love to fuel her fight against racist oppression” (655). Veering away from the stock tragic mulatta heroine that dominated women’s sentimental writing and abolitionist tracts in the late nineteenth century, Hopkins shapes Winona as both part Indian princess and part gender-defying revolutionary—a heroine taking form from two lines of intersectional imaginary lineage. Hopkins’ embrace of pan-Indian gendered stereotype, however, is as important as her rejection of the stock tragic mulatta, and her inability to create a truly intersectional imaginary reflects the limits of intersectional possibility for Hopkins.

In another transgressive moment later in the novel, however, Winona performatively challenges intersecting colonial racial and gender logics: she darkens her face and dresses up as the “mulatto” Allen Pinks in order to nurse Maxwell back to health and ultimately save his life (101). Her gender crossing tendencies have been previously described in the text by Maybee: “Winona has the pluck of a man,” but this direct instance of cross-dressing and cross-gender performance—she goes so far as to kiss Maxwell on the lips while in costume—roots her border-crossing in the literal (61). It also suggests the performativity of race—an important concept considering Hopkins’ overarching suggestion throughout the text that one can be self-identified

as Indian through “training” and adherence to a set of characteristics. In this case, the ability to perform race (and gender) moves into the terrain of Black identity, suggesting the narrow lines between rigidly policed legal definitions of “blood.” Even Maxwell cannot ascertain the true identity of his nurse, although he “could not shake off the idea that somewhere he had known the lad before in his life” (101). Later in the novel, Winona also actively participates in the anti-slavery raid with John Brown’s camp in Kansas, bearing arms against the pro-slavery “border ruffians,” and Maxwell lovingly sees “the slight figure of Winona with rifle in hand waving him a farewell salute” (122). To what extent Winona is able to trespass the borders of colonial racial and gender logics because of her self-selected Seneca identity is a question worth posing—her indefinability means she exists outside the boundaries of language and definition, and certainly outside the reaches of law.

In a pivotal moment of the text, Hopkins returns to her concern over biology, “blood” and lineage in a conversation between Maxwell and Winona about the limitations of race, caste, and training that seems to defy some of Hopkins’ previous assertions about the possibilities of racial hybridity as a form of resistance:

‘You, with your Indian training, ought to feel with us and not think of fear’, said Warren.

‘But then, I am not of the blood.’

‘True.’

His reply fell upon her ear like a reproach—a reflection upon her Negro origin. Her suspicion sounded in her voice as she replied:

‘Better an Indian than a Negro? I do not blame you for your preference.’

‘Why speak with that tone—so scornfully? Is it possible that you can think so meanly of me?’

She could not meet his eye, but her answer was humbly given—her answer couched in the language of the tribes.

‘Are you not a white brave? Do not all of them hate the black blood?’

‘No; not all white men, thank God. In my country we think not of the color of the skin but of the man—the woman—the heart.’ (118-119)

For the first time in the novel, Winona acknowledges that her Native identity is not biological, and infers that this compromises its authenticity.<sup>27</sup> Her primary concern in this conversation, however, is the hierarchy of Whiteness, Blackness, and Indianness that she further infers from Maxwell’s silence—her assumption that it is better to be “an Indian than a Negro.” Despite her White-Anglo ancestry, Winona defines herself only within the binary of “Indian/Negro,” and in the case of biology, or, to borrow Hopkins’ terminology, “blood,” only “Negro.” In her desire to be accepted by her love interest—a character Hopkins has cast as prototypical white European masculinity—Winona reverts to old systems of binary racial purity and hierarchy. It is Warren Maxwell, notably, who must heroically triumph over the distorted American system of caste prejudice with race blindness. A page later, as the conversation continues, Maxwell says: “Mere birth does not count for more than one’s whole training afterward, and you have been bred among another race altogether” (120). In this instance at least,

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<sup>27</sup> The concept of “authenticity” is itself problematic, particularly in twenty-first century Indigenous and Native studies, as it connects to authoritarian ideals of legally policed identity by the settler colonial state. From her turn-of-the-twentieth century perspective affected by the lexicon of race science, Hopkins’ questioning of biological “authenticity” is undoubtedly more limited. For a contemporary discussion of authenticity and Indigenous identity, see Deborah L. Madsen, *Native Authenticity: Transnational Perspectives on Native American Literary Studies*. SUNY Press, 2010.



in Hopkins' racialized lexicon, to be "of the blood" is equated with biological determinism, an ideology advocated for by race science of the nineteenth century. But racial "training"—as the supposedly clairvoyant Maxwell indicates—or nurture over nature—can triumph over biology.<sup>28</sup>

As Colleen O'Brien notes, it is unreasonable to expect Hopkins and other Black writers of her era to fully and responsibly refute late nineteenth and early twentieth century tenants of race science and scientific racism, particularly considering that these tenants do not distinguish between biology and culture, and writers like Hopkins did not have access to later scientific developments made available in the twentieth century, like DNA analysis ("Blacks in All Quarters of the Globe" 247). However, is it interesting that Hopkins does make two key distinctions here in racial identity: an identity conveyed through birth and an identity conveyed through cultural training. Although her ideology is in no way consistent throughout her text, Hopkins here raises questions important to Native communities, certainly in a Dawes Act enrollment era, when Native identities and "blood quantum" were aggressively defined and legislated by the United States Government and tied to land ownership.

In what amounts to Hopkins' most historically accurate reimagination of intersectionality, Winona's hybridity is also one of geographical and national displacement. After Maxwell's escape from prison, as the band of assorted travelers are seeking refuge in the countryside, Winona asks: "'Which is my country, I wonder?'" (119) Winona's national border-crossing has mirrored her racial border-crossing: she has been geographically and racially displaced by the death of her White protector/father, by the institution of slavery, and by her

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<sup>28</sup> Race science—of the variety espoused by George Morton and Louis Agassiz—created a nineteenth century racial hierarchy with Blackness on the very bottom. Native Americans, according to Morton's extraordinarily unscientific and randomized "cranial examinations" were ranked just above "the Negro." Race science was thus rooted in the body—only biology could determine intellectual capacity, reasoning, degree of "civilization," and identity. In the early twentieth century, the language of race science changed to include that of eugenics and the nature vs. nurture controversy. See Louis Menard, "Morton, Agassiz, and the Origins of Scientific Racism in the United States," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 34, pp. 110-113.

cultural rehomeing on and then removal from Seneca lands. Her question is one of gendered citizenship shaped and made fraught by colonial racial logics and the institution of slavery. Her perpetual displacement echoes the fourteenth amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1868, and the concept of birthright citizenship. The amendment states that “all persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside.” As one of the three Reconstruction-era amendments to the Constitution, the fourteenth amendment ultimately aimed to protect the civil rights of freed slaves after the Civil War (83).<sup>29</sup> Hopkins’ interest in Winona’s transnationalism and displacement mirrors the displacement of freed slaves after the War—the historic moment her characters will just barely escape as they leave for England at the end of the novel. It also mirrors the displacement of American Indians, who, as Susan Sheckel explains, lived as neither citizens nor aliens but in a transitory space in the national imaginary that aligned with that of the slave (12). The curious part, however, is Hopkins’ ending as an answer to this question of transnationalism and displacement. Winona leaves for England with Maxwell, and true to the form of sentimental fiction, finds her ultimate happy ending in marriage and domesticity. Notably, she does not return to the Seneca Nation, or to the Black community, or to a multicultural community, but into the arms of imperialism and the original colonizer (despite the romantic anti-slavery heroism of Hopkins’ nobly drawn Warren Maxwell). However, Winona’s embrace of the geography of colonialism means that she and Judah both escape the Civil War and further “caste prejudice,” and, as Colleen O’Brien has argued, their journey could

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<sup>29</sup> The difference between legal theory and practice is, of course, extraordinarily evident in the enforcement of the three Reconstruction-era amendments mentioned here. It would be misleading to assume that the passage of these three amendments at all ended racial hatred or prejudice against emancipated slaves or free Blacks in the years following the Civil War: the laws were enforced by the same individuals who had previously justified slavery through the deeply held belief that Black people were innately inferior. See A. Leon Higginbotham Jr., *Shades of Freedom: Race and the American Legal Process*. Oxford University Press, 1996.

represent a reversal of the original “civilizing mission” of Europeans coming to the American shores to conquer supposedly untamed landscapes. Winona and Judah, as representative of racial hybridity, have “infiltrated the boundaries of the mythic origin of Anglo-American civilization and it can no longer be imagined as racially pure” (“Blacks in All Quarters of the Globe” 254). Either way, the answer to Winona’s displacement is clear: she will not find a home within American borders, as there is no community that can conceive of her, linguistically or otherwise.

### **“A Lion of a Man”: Judah at the Intersection of Black and Red**

In the character of Judah, the orphaned son of a slave mother, raised by a White and Seneca-identified father, Hopkins again challenges notions of racial purity and complicates gendered racial logics of physiognomy, culture, and “blood.” In the opening pages of the novel, Hopkins notes that Judah “might have been mistaken for an Indian at first glance,” due to his “lithe brown body” and his “moccasins and dress,” but his race is at once ascertained by the hair on his head: it is the “curly, crispy hair of a Negro” (2). Ebenzer Maybee, again the novel’s perpetuator of legal and racial labels, describes Judah to Warren Maxwell as an “Injun-nigger,” due to the fact that “you can’t tame him down” (23). He goes on to note that “White Eagle taught him to speak like a senator, ride bareback like a hull circus; he can shoot a bird on the wing and hunt and fish like all natur” (23) Judah’s hyphenated identity amounts to the defiance of all racialized expectations for behavior—despite his Black appearance and legal identity, he has been taught the civic eloquence of “white” speech, and he possesses the “savage” nobility of his adopted tribe. Hopkins embraces here the stereotypical and deeply racialized characteristics most usually associated with Native Americans in the latter half of the nineteenth century: an untameable and wild nature, a special connection to the land, an opposition to progress, and a

deep commitment to advancing the cause of liberty (Lovett 195). Most dramatically, however, Hopkins claims that this hybrid cultural upbringing and Judah's life with White Eagle "had planted refinement inbred. In him was the true expression of the Negro when given an opportunity equal with the white man" (48).

Hopkins is clear that Judah's savagery, however, comes from his tribal upbringing. When Judah is enslaved by the Thomsons and becomes (supposedly fittingly due to his Native cultural connections) assistant overseer, it is his Indian "training" that prepares him for his new employment. The narrator notes that working within the system of chattel slavery, he now witnesses scenes that "rivalled in cruelty the ferocity of the savage tribes among whom he had passed his boyhood" (33). In this sense, Hopkins goes so far as to equate the savagery of slavery with the supposed "savagery" of Native practices, aligning white plantation systems with Native/Seneca modes of living. This alignment of Native practices with Eurocentric slavery underscores the stereotype of Native savage/ferocious warrior well and alive in Hopkins' imaginary, but also problematically ignores the long history of European colonial enslavement practices as introduced to Eastern and Southeastern tribes in the eighteenth century. As Claudio Saunt describes in his work on Creeks, Seminoles, and the encroaching problem of slavery in Indian ancestral lands pre-Removal, most Southeastern tribes were conflicted in their perspectives regarding plantation slavery and some, such as the Creek, were disturbed by European notions of social oppression which conflicted with Native systems of kinship and order (56, 51). Hopkins' suggestion that Native cultural practices were as "savage" as Euro-centric

plantation slavery takes late nineteenth and early twentieth century stereotypes of the “noble savage” to another level of dangerous myth-making that selectively omits the historical record.<sup>30</sup>

Judah’s supposedly “Indian” nature emerges in the scene when he subdues Thomson’s horse—a horse that could not be controlled by any white man present. Judah uses the “power of the hypnotic eye,” a skill Hopkins writes was “known and practised among all the Indian tribes of the West” (37-38). As punishment for showing up Colonel Titus, who could not control the horse himself, Judah is brutally whipped—and just prior, the anonymous man who does the whipping says, “I’m going to tear your black skin” (40). As punishment for Judah’s exercise of supposed Indian sensibilities that triumphed over white cognizance, he is answered by the reminder of his Blackness and his positionality in the legal racial hierarchy. Indianness—cultural, intellectual, self-identified, or otherwise—within the colonial logics of plantation space does not trump the symbolic meaning of Blackness. Despite the brutality of the punishment, Judah remains mute: “He had learned his lesson of endurance in the school of the Indian stoic, and he bore his punishment without a murmur” (41). Judah answers the abuse with another performance of Indian identity, using his purported Indianness to resist the structures of White disciplinary oppression. This both situates American national identity as a performance—like Winona’s performance as Allen Pinks—and again casts Indianness within Hopkins’ imaginary as a tool of resistance that operates outside of the Black/White binary and lends superior strength to resistance.

Judah’s Indianness in Hopkins’ lexicon is performative, taught by a White man, geographically imbibed, and militarized as resistance to White oppression. And yet Judah’s

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<sup>30</sup> Again, I can only speculate the extent to which Hopkins had access to the actual historical record of both tribal practices and the atrocities committed against enslaved Black people as part of the plantation slavery system. Her conflation of the two systems in her imaginary, however, is the more telling component of her narrative.

Blackness is irrefutable and emphasized repeatedly in the text—he is described as “the enraged black”, “the giant black, and “the negro” (108, 106, 126) over and over again, to the point of redundancy. His training—or cultural identity, however problematic—cannot supersede his legal identity. The possibilities of racial intersectionality are deeply gendered in Hopkins’ imaginary, and Judah has even less chance than Winona at moving beyond the lexicon of the nation-state and its rigid definitions and affiliations of race.

### **A Conclusion: Problematizing Legacies of Language**

It is important to remember the positionality of both Hopkins’ and Callahan’s novels as what is often deemed “sentimental” fiction—a limited stock genre that was available to marginalized women writers seeking access to the print world in the nineteenth century. Claudia Tate also reminds us that the larger genre of post-Reconstruction domestic novels that feature mixed-race marriages, like Callahan’s and Hopkins’ (although Tate refers to Black women writers) are frequently misread by modern audiences, who tend to focus on the idealization of happy unions and often utopian endings of domestic fantasy. Post-Reconstruction readers, Tate argues, would have read these types of texts as an “inherent subversion of racist ideology” (83). In the 1890s, marriage was the foundation of civilization for women writers, and this meant marriage could serve as a means through which to develop character, identity, and racial uplift (125-127). For both Wynema and Winona, then, we cannot disregard their positionality at the end of each novel as purportedly happily married to a man of another race—even if their domestic utopias offend modern sensibilities. Reading along historical lines of reception, as Tate urges, Winona border-crosses again, both geographically and through matrimony: she marries Maxwell, a man representative of White colonial power, and leaves the hybridity of her

multiracial community for the ancestral land of her father, supposedly discarding legal identities of Blackness to make ancestral and future claims on colonial Whiteness at the point of origin. Wynema marries Robin, but through Creek matrilineal descent, we imagine, remains a part of her Nation (as pan-Indian and rife with cultural inaccuracies as it may be), and produces a progressively more Anglicized family lineage with someone whose socio-political beliefs regarding temperate civic activism line up with her own. Rather than marriages of convenience, these are identity-shaping unions that cross the borders of race—and would likely have been read as such by their contemporary readers in eras rife with fears concerning miscegenation and its legal implications. Reading both texts with Tate's historical frameworks in mind both centralizes the marriage plot as essential to understanding each text as a tract of civic activism, but also as a text of racial reconciliation aligned, to some extent, with promoting race activism and a form of intersectionality through domestic intimacy with Whiteness.

And yet for a modern audience, the marriage plot is only one player contributing to a larger lexicon of racialized citizenship, identity, race performance, and hybridity that both Hopkins and Callahan employ, with varying levels of complexity. In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Gayatri Spivak suggests that "too uncritical a celebration of the 'hybrid'...inadvertently legitimizes the 'pure' by reversal" (62). In an era obsessed with the color line, Hopkins' representation of Black resistance to White legal definitions as empowered by Native cultural affiliation participates in what Jodi Byrd describes as a form of internal colonialism: the "fait accompli of the colonial project that disappears sovereignty, land rights, and self-governance" through "transforming American Indians into a minority within a country of minorities" (137). The resulting effect—a legitimization of the colonial, a discourse of "purity," and a reaffirmation

of Hegelian dialectics of self/other—are problematic consequences of employing “uncritical” hybridity as a tool of resistance.

And yet despite Hopkins’ questioning of multiplicity and biological/cultural discourses in *Winona*, her most explicit statements about race still perpetuate the White/Black binary: “Who is my social equal?” Hopkins’ narrator asks, just before Judah declares his (not so brotherly) love for Winona. The same narrator responds: “He whose society affords the greatest pleasure, whose tastes are congenial, and who is my brother in the spirit of the scriptural text, be he white or black, bond or free, rich or poor” (90). This reinforces the role of racial intersectionality for Hopkins: hybridity is, first and foremost, in service of the binary, and can only function within the constraints of its definitional structures.

Callahan’s representation of a White/Indian binary, while omitting the long history of Creek racial multiplicity, is the opposite and most extreme of Spivak’s paradigm: too uncritical a celebration of the pure delegitimizes the hybrid—in this case, of history, and the legacy of Creek participation in colonial systems of chattel slavery. Callahan’s active marginalization of Blackness and omission of intersectional Black/Creek history amounts to a participation in another form of internal colonization: through negating the presence of Black people in the Creek Nation in narrative form, Callahan negates their claim to any futurity of land rights, citizenship, and participation in governance. In fact, the novel refuses to posit any narrative futurity at all, explicitly asking the reader: “But why prolong this book into the future, when the present is so fair?” (134). Callahan ends her novel with the idealized portrait of White/Indian amalgamative domestic bliss, represented as “happy families nestling in the villages near together” (135). The White/Indian future is instead subsumed in Wynema’s motherhood, little Genevieve’s “mixed-blood” existence, and the lineage of the White/Indian nuclear family.



Intersectionality, it almost goes without saying, is far beyond the bounds of Callahan's imaginative possibility.

Reading these texts intersectionally—to look for ways both Hopkins and Callahan engage the national rhetorical and legal lexicon of race and citizenship concerning Black, Indian, and White identity at the turn of the century—is to identify points of collision, but also to look for dissonance. Writing from disparate geographies, positionalities, and life experiences, pairing Callahan and Hopkins' novels may seem like an exercise in futility—or a slippery slope, at the very least. But in an era preoccupied with policing the language of racial identity, tying Indian citizenship to the ownership of land, disenfranchising both Blacks and Natives, and denying the possibility of any hybrid identity that did not serve the machinations of White capitalist enterprise, both novels limn out the possibilities—and impossibilities—of Black/Native intersectionality within imaginary spaces. Looking forward to the futurity beyond the imaginative space of each novel, the Curtis Act of 1898 would begin the dissolution of tribal government and alter the geography of the Creek Nation—although Callahan would not live to see it—and the ongoing racial violence of Jim Crow, legalized segregation, and citizenship disenfranchisement would continue the exclusionary removal of Black Americans from civic society. And yet with the advent of new theory in the 1910s and 1920s by scholars like Carter G. Woodson and Alain Locke that challenged biological conceptions of race and instead suggested cultural and historical origins, and work by Kenneth Porter in the early 1930s that posited actual historical intersections between Native American and African American people relationally, a sub-current of the conversation began to whisper of a narrative that might run counter to a

monolithic discourse of “purity” entrenched in the body.<sup>31</sup> The national lexicon, however, did not feel the same impact, and this fact is reflected in the early twentieth century lived experiences of Native and Black people affected profoundly by the language of an exclusionary nation-state that ties—and continues to tie—its definitional structures to both land and citizenship.

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<sup>31</sup> For more on Woodson’s and Porter’s theories, see Carter G. Woodson, “The Relations of Negroes and Indians in Massachusetts,” *Journal of Negro History*, vol. 5, 1920, pp. 45-57, and Kenneth Porter, “Relations between Negroes and Indians within the Present Limits of the United States,” *Journal of Negro History*,” vol. 17, 1932, pp. 287-88.

### 3 REIMAGINING ARCHIVAL ENCOUNTER IN FRANCES BENJAMIN JOHNSTON'S *THE HAMPTON ALBUM* AND CARRIE MAE WEEMS' *THE HAMPTON PROJECT*

To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges.

-Linda Tuhiwai-Smith

In all its effects, learning the meaning of *things*  
is better than learning the meaning of *words*.

-Written on a Hampton Institute  
chalkboard, *The Hampton Album*

#### **Initial Encounters: 1900 and 2000**

In November of 1899, over thirty years after Hampton Institute's founding, photographer Frances Benjamin Johnson received her commission from then-principal Hollis Burke Frissell to photograph the institute. No stranger to educational reform photography, Johnston—an emerging portraitist and documentary photographer in a male-dominated field—had previously documented all-White schools in Washington D.C, and, as a result of her perceived success at Hampton, would go on to photograph both Carlisle Indian Industrial School and Tuskegee Institute. Johnston's resulting platinotypes, at least 150 highly posed vignettes of African American and American Indian students in elaborate Victorian costume, both in various classrooms and “on the field” doing industrial and agricultural work, were commissioned for an explicit purpose: firstly, they would travel to the 1900 Paris Exhibition, for the express goal of demonstrating to an international audience America's dedication to “negro improvement” in the

years following emancipation. The images also served a broader institutional goal: as Hampton indicated in their monthly newsletter, *The Southern Workman*, the “value of such an exhibit lies not only in showing to others but in making clear to the school itself what it is doing” (January 1900). They would be used to illustrate articles about Hamptonian teaching methodologies, emphasize a Hamptonian course of study in institutional catalogues, and would finally be compiled into a carefully sequenced and organized album by an early archivist of the institute.

Despite the austere and utopian vision projected in her photographs, Johnston did not arrive at Hampton at an apolitical point in American racial history: there was serious national debate about the role of African American soldiers in Cuba, Hawaii, and the Philippines, and racial oppression and violence against Black Americans was at an all-time high. Between 1889 and 1893, there was a record number of reported lynchings, mostly localized in, although not exclusively confined to, the South (Wexler 129). Resonances of the Dawes Act of 1887 and the Curtis Act of 1898 emphasized a growing national concern with the “Indian Problem,” and an increasingly popular reservation system in the American West continued to suggest that the solution rested in continuing violences of removal.

Nearly 100 years later, in 1998, artist Carrie Mae Weems was commissioned by Williams College, the alma mater of Hampton’s founder, Samuel Armstrong Chapman, to revisit Johnston’s images on the centennial of their original commission and respond in an installation project. The resulting installation, *The Hampton Project*, was composed of diaphanous hanging muslin sheets and mounted framed canvases, and included both digitally reprinted images from the Johnston collection, and images sourced from the broader Hampton University archive. Weems’ exhibition, as indicated in her artist’s statement, was intended to critique the deeply racialized legacy of American education (*The Hampton Project Catalogue* 88). It was, however,

not universally well-received: Jeanne Zeidler, the curator of Hampton University's museum, described Weems' process as abusive of archival materials, and the resulting installation as an oversimplification of educational history. She did not allow the exhibit to travel to Hampton, indicating in an essay accompanying the official exhibition catalogue that "the artist appropriated images of real people who had/have real lives and real stories, and decreed meaning that may or may not fit the facts of these individual lives" (Hampton Project Catalogue 77).

Weems is no stranger to archival controversy. In the early 1990s, Harvard University threatened a lawsuit for Weems' appropriation of daguerreotypes from the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in her work entitled *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*. After signing a contract promising not to use the images without the museum's permission, Weems manipulated daguerreotypes commissioned by Harvard University professor Louis Agassiz in the 1800s of Drana, Jack, Renty, and Delia: four enslaved persons whom Agassiz photographed in order to illustrate his theories of racial/biological difference. Although Harvard eventually dropped the lawsuit—after Weems challenged the school to a difficult conversation about the history of slavery, ownership, and contract law—the controversy has elicited much meditation and scholarly consideration of the connections between art, appropriation, copyright infringement, and histories of oppression. As legal scholar Yxta Maya Murray asks in reference to Weems' specific case: "Who owns the violent past?" (2).

It is the controversy surrounding Weems' projects, however, that invites a necessary interrogation of colonial archival methodology and form and the role of archival encounter in reimagining historical sites of oppression and the possibilities for decolonial futures. I argue for a re-reading of Weems' *The Hampton Project* as an act of theorizing—and a subsequent re-examination of Frances Benjamin Johnston's *The Hampton Album* as a site of decolonial

possibility rather than a static and documentary record of empirical truth. Re-reading Johnston's archive through Weems' theorizing evokes what Tina Campt terms a "tense grammar": the idea that "photography and the portrait in particular are neither wholly liberatory vehicles of agency, transcendence, or performativity nor unilateral instruments of objectification and abjection. They are always already both at once" (59). Weems' project theorizes the multiplicitous sites of encounter in a photograph, and makes visible both its performativity and its potential to reveal the tension between coloniality and resistance.

Weems' project also urges the viewer/participant to re-frame archival encounter and institutional record as both haptic and a site of radical relationality, a place that highlights what Papaschase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald terms as the "ethical imperative to recognize the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences are layered and position us in relation to each other, and how our futures as people similarly are tied together" (7). Reimagining an historic archive like Johnston's through this rubric of radical relationality is to acknowledge the significance of networking an archival object beyond its frame—to read both through the archive and beyond the archive, as a decolonial act that defies archival record as static and immobile. Reading for radical relationality, I suggest, reveals what Campt calls the "soft buzzing tension of colonialism and the low hum of resistance and subversion," and points towards the multiplicitous possibilities of future archival encounter (2).

### **"The Hand, Head, and Heart": Hampton as Institute and Ideology**

To understand the ways in which Weems theorizes against institutional ideology, it is necessary to first understand the historical context of Hampton as a major locus of industrial school system technologies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hampton Normal and

Agricultural Institute opened its doors in April of 1868 with five teachers and fifteen students. Its first group of students had to meet the following criteria in order to gain admission: be able to read and write at the fifth- grade level, have a “good” character, and fall somewhere between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five (Engs 118). Hampton, the physical institution, began as a branch of the American Missionary Association, and was centered around the provision of an education for African freedmen who could not read or write and the training up of teachers who could then return to their communities and replicate a model of Anglicized education. The AMA established eight such schools between 1867 and 1868, each located in a black majority city (Macon, Savannah, Atlanta, Charleston, Louisville, Nashville, Talledega, and Hampton), and AMA officials chose Virginia and the Hampton community as a prime location for a school due to its large population of educated former slaves (Engs 111, 113).<sup>32</sup> Hampton Institute also aimed to be a resource for the Hampton community: it operated the Whittier Primary School as a teaching practicum, and sourced students from the local community.<sup>33</sup>

The ideological Hampton, however, was sourced in the philosophies of the institute’s founder, Samuel Armstrong Chapman. Chapman, a son of former missionaries in Hawaii and a commander of the Eighth and Ninth Regiments of U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War, secured independent funding for his school through charitable and government support and severed from the AMA in 1887. Chapman deeply believed that the institute did not exist to “merely educate students, but to make men and women out of individuals belonging to

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<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, the institute later explained its selection of Hampton, Virginia as connected to both Native and Black history: “The region about Hampton is intimately associated with early American history. Near the school grounds once stood the Indian village of Kecoughtan, from which the Indians were driven by white settlers” and “not far distant is the spot where the first cargo of Negro slaves was sold in America.” See Hampton Institute Course Catalogue, 1896, pp. 17.

<sup>33</sup> It’s important to note that Hampton Institute was not well-received initially by the Hampton, Virginia community. Of particular issue was the lack of consult with local Black leaders as to the mission and structure of the school. See Robert Francis Engs, *Freedom’s First Generation: Black Hampton Virginia, 1861-1890*. Fordham UP, 2004.

the down-trodden and despised races; to make of them not accomplished scholars, but to build up character and manhood..." (qtd. in Talbot 217). After focusing on the education of Black students for ten years, Hampton enrolled its first Native American students in April of 1878: Captain R.H. Pratt brought fifteen Kiowa and Cheyenne prisoners of war from St. Augustine, Florida to Hampton's campus (*Ten Years' Work for the Indians* 10). As Donal F. Lindsey notes, after years of removing American Indians to the distant West, the US government began to entertain the idea of an eastward removal as a punishment for supposed crimes. Pratt's group of prisoners were charged with murder and "depredations" without trial, and Pratt had to convince Armstrong to take some of them on as students: they had already been working and learning in white communities in St. Augustine, and had assimilated to white patterns of appearance and dress. It would be difficult, in other words, to frame their transformation as a Hampton success story, much to Armstrong's dismay (28-30).

Hampton's American Indian program remained secondary to the institute's focus on African American education. In ten years' time, according to the Institute's carefully maintained and copious student records, 467 "Indian" students enrolled at the institute: 320 boys and 147 girls, representing 27 tribes. These "Indian" students were labeled as "mostly" Sioux from Dakota: Yankton, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Cheyenne River, and Standing Rock (301 students), Omahas and Winnebagos (70 students), and one Pamunkey (*Ten Years' Work* 10, 11).<sup>34</sup> Armstrong viewed the program as demonstrative of what educational institutions could do

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<sup>34</sup> Hampton's archival records considering Indian presence are exhaustive—Indian students are listed in both course catalogues and promotional material separately from Black students, and are labeled by name, hometown, and tribal affiliation. However, we must bear in mind that this data is self-represented, self-contained, and self-published—with the primary motivation of soliciting White charitable aid for the Institute. Even representations of tribal affiliation must be suspect, particularly considering Armstrong's request in 1878 that the Indians enrolling at Hampton bring with them "wild, barbarous" things in order to "work that photograph business well" (qtd. in Lindsey 34).



for these supposedly downtrodden wards of the US government rather than as a full-fledged systemic intervention, indicating in 1893 that “Twice as many as we can take wish to come; yet the really desirable ones are not very many, and we do not care to increase our numbers. Our Indian work is illustrative rather than exhaustive” (*Twenty-Two Years Work* 9).

Despite its status as one of the first interracial institutions in the United States, education at Hampton was separated by race: academic and agricultural classes were segregated, “colored” students were paid at a higher rate “as a rule” than Indian students as their skill level was perceived as more specialized, and segregated dining rooms and lodging were in place.<sup>35</sup> As further evidence of their separation, Black and Native students were even distinguished by stereotypical culinary appetite: “Negroes” were served pork in their dining halls and “Indians” beef (*Ten Years Work* 24). There was a separate “Indian Department” of the Industrial school, a separate “Teacher for Indian Girls” in the sewing and dressmaking department, and even segregated laundry facilities (*Hampton Catalogue* 1896-1903). These institutional differences were a manifestation of Chapman’s foundational “scale of civilization” (in descending order: white, yellow, black, red) and his inherent belief, as stated in a speech on Indian Education in the East, that “The Negro is strong, the Indian weak, because the one is trained to labor and the other is not” (qtd. in Talbot 278). Chapman goes on to claim that “One has had too little and the other too much freedom,” but “Both have capacity to become citizens and perform all practical duties” (278).

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<sup>35</sup> According to *Ten Years’ Work for Indians*, the pay scale at Hampton was based on the “interest shown, work done, and progress made” by Indian students. The publication notably does not state a flat amount per month, but does note that “colored students, who provide for their own board, clothing and books, are paid besides board, from four to ten dollars per month,” which is “as a rule, at a rate higher than Indians...” (29). Besides Armstrong’s scale of civilization implicated in this model, it is important to remember that Indians were considered wards of the government in the early twentieth century, rather than future workers.

It is important to note that despite his celebratory institutional role as founder, Principal, and promoter of racial “progress,” Chapman was a staunch racial segregationist: in regards to Black freedmen, he indicated that the “severe discipline of slavery strengthened a weak race. Professed friendship for a strong one has weakened it” (278). His inherent belief that the institution of chattel slavery had prepared Black students for labor, taught them subservience, and developed a sense of manual skill and immunity to hard physical labor was manifest in the day-to-day operations of the Institute. Regarding Native students, Chapman viewed their inherent “weakness” as resulting from a lack of systemic enslavement. He viewed the segregation of the reservation system as the most appropriate antidote: after his travels West, he indicated that “I am convinced of the truth, that reservations under good management afford the best conditions to prepare the red race for citizenship--develop, not destroy them” (qtd. in Talbot 286).<sup>36</sup>

These ideologies formed the educational curricula of Hampton Institute: an emphasis on “practical” agricultural education that would ultimately maintain Chapman’s scale of civilization and systemic racial hierarchy and prepare both African Americans and American Indians for subservient labor, while at the same time appealing to White charitable donors as a Christian-centric salvation mission of the “despised races.” Hampton’s curriculum thus prioritized the “useful” and deemphasized the “academic,” a distinction Chapman believed was based on biological, scientific realities of intellectual racial difference. He was particularly scathing towards “the Indian”: “Savages have good memories; they acquire, but do not

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<sup>36</sup> Armstrong believed Black students could positively influence Indian students, and he often allowed Black students to become teachers in Indian classes. He wrote in 1888, “It is evident to all workers here that the influence of their cheerful, good-tempered, earnest and industrious Negro schoolmates and fellow workmen is a positive advantage to the Indians” (*Ten Years’ Work* 35).

comprehend; they devour, but do not digest knowledge. They have no conception of mental discipline. A well-balanced mind is attained only after centuries of development" (qtd. in Talbot 277). This belief in biological difference further informed the opportunities for education offered to American Indian students. Booker T. Washington, Hampton alum and founder of Tuskegee Institute after Chapman's educational model, offers a similarly disparaging interpretation of Native positionality in *Up From Slavery*:

I knew that the average Indian felt himself above the white man, and, of course, he felt himself far above the Negro, largely on account of the fact of the Negro having submitted to slavery - a thing which the Indian would never do. The Indians, in the Indian Territory, owned a large number of slaves during the days of slavery. Aside from this, there was a general feeling that the attempt to educate and civilize the red men at Hampton would be a failure(47).<sup>37</sup>

For African American students, education at Hampton was based on the foundation of an enslaved past, which they were taught to interpret through an Armstrongian lens. Albert Shaw, in an article for the *American Monthly Review of Reviews* published in 1900 and illustrated by Frances Benjamin Johnston's platinotypes of Hampton, wrote "Young negroes at Hampton are taught to take the historical rather than the controversial view of slavery. They are made to see that slavery at least supplied the South with an industrial system," and plantations served to advance the "knowledge of agriculture and the practical handicrafts" ("Learning by Doing"). The connection between "industrial" education, an enslaved past, and a subservient future was made clear both to students in Hampton's program and the outside public. Eager for charitable

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<sup>37</sup> Washington famously returned to Hampton—at Armstrong's invitation—to serve as teacher and "dormitory father" for male Indian students in 1879. His experiences with racial hierarchies—White/Black/Indian at Hampton and White/Indian/Black outside of Hampton—are recounted in his autobiography. See *Up from Slavery*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1901, pp. 102.

donations to support its programs, Hampton was quick to assure the White readers of its propaganda that they did not intend to invert the “scale of civilization”—only to remediate the inevitability of African American and American Indian participation in White society.

Hampton maintains a copious archival record, mostly due to the institute’s aim to “keep its graduates always in view” (*Twenty Two Years’ Work* 20). Cora Folsom, a teacher, secretary, and designated “Indian Correspondent” at the Institute from 1880 to 1922, made visits to Indian Reservations, wrote letters to graduated and departed students, and kept extensive files. Updates on the progress of students—both African American and American Indian, both positive and negative, were frequently made accessible in Hampton’s many publications (*Southern Workman*, *Ten Years’ Work*, *Twenty Two Years’ Work*).<sup>38</sup> Hampton’s obsession with visibility was largely trained on securing its own reputation as a locus of transformation: its programs could catapult students from “savage” to “civilized,” from ward to citizen, from previously enslaved to full participant in the structure of society. Any failure of a student to transform was due to inherent biological frailty—not the institute’s programs, segregationist policies, or assimilative ideologies.<sup>39</sup>

Due to changing federal Indian policy and a paucity of funding, Hampton shut down its Indian program in 1923. In 1929, Hampton became a college; in 1930 it renamed itself “Hampton Institute,” significantly changed its educational program, and promoted its then-principal, Dr. George Perley Phenix, to President. In 1936, W.E.B. Du Bois remarked “behold,

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<sup>38</sup> These student updates were gathered from “letters of correspondence” sent by institute staff, and presumably edited before publication. The institute was sure to state: “While we cannot be responsible for individual statements, and mistakes may exist, we feel confident that our records in general are in purpose and substance correct” (*Twenty Two Years’ Work* 293).

<sup>39</sup> Black student records are published separately from Indian student records. Cora Folsom maintained updated and detailed accounts, dating to the beginning of Hampton’s Indian program in 1878 and Hampton’s acceptance of Pratt’s prisoners as students. Her accounts include tribal affiliation/agency, “Indian name,” any interceding agents who initiated contact with Hampton, degree of “blood,” the names of scholarship donors, and current “status.” See *Twenty Two Years’ Work*, pp. 325-486.

Hampton had become a college and was wondering what to do with her industrial equipment!" (*The Education of Black People* 15). In 1984, the school was finally renamed "Hampton University."

### **Theorizing *The Hampton Project***

In her 1988 landmark essay, "The Race for Theory," Barbara Christian writes against the Western-centric, White-dominated movement of critical literary theory, noting that "people of color have always theorized-but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic" (68). She goes on to say that this theorizing is "often in narrative forms, in the stories we [Black women] create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, because dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking" (68). This concept—that Black women have been theorizing all along (Christian reminds us that she pointedly uses the verb form rather than the noun)—critiques the landscape of literary theory as rooted in Western institutions, philosophy, epistemology, and the compulsion towards abstraction. Weems' *The Hampton Project* evokes Christian's delineation of Black women's theorizing as narrative, invested in language play, and marked by the dynamics of mobility, transit, and relationality.

*The Hampton Project* as installation is a dramatization of archival encounter. It is at once both interactive and immersive: Weems forces a detached observer to become an engaged participant in a sensorial and monumentally resized "archive," moving through a series of rooms with large (some as substantial as six feet by eight feet), printed, diaphanous muslin banners suspended from the ceiling (Figure 1). Participants must physically engage with the displayed material: banners quiver as museum-goers brush past; the digitally-printed images ripple in response to movement. Due to the transparent quality of muslin, viewers can see through images

into other images, creating a simultaneity of vision that embeds faces and bodies into one other. Large canvas prints also line the walls, creating a fully immersive field of vision that does not allow for visual rest or refuge (Figure 2). In the absence of titles, dates, and contextualizing information that usually accompanies archival documents, Weems gestures instead towards the primacy of oral record: an audio tract plays over loudspeakers, broadcasting Weems' voice and a monologue she wrote herself, narrating a broader colonial history of enslavement and Native disenfranchisement, and moving to a narration of Black/Native intersection within the institution of Hampton.

The images themselves, borrowed from Frances Johnston's work at Hampton, the Hampton archives, the Williams College archive, and Weems' own collection, represent a range of Black and Native subjects located both within and outside the institution of Hampton, and do not reflect a linear chronology. A recognizable image from Johnston's archive called *Old Folks at Home*, representing an elderly Black couple in a "traditional" (and purportedly antiquated) Hampton, Virginia cottage, is suspended from the ceiling alongside a large "H" that Weems constructs of Hampton alumni yearbook portraits. A large-scale image of what appears to be a late twentieth century Hampton female graduate in a yearbook picture, smiling and wearing pearls, hangs alongside an image of Black women picking cotton in a field. The rhetorical, propagandistic, and politically charged chronology of Johnston's Hampton Album has been reinscribed as a polyphony of historical positionalities and archival material, centered in Johnston's 1900 vision of Hampton, but inclusive of larger, systemic representations of Black and Native experience: a KKK parade float, an early nineteenth century Indian baptism, an Indian shaman figure, an Adobe church, and a child in a paper mask constructed to look like a stereotypical "Native." There are no titles, descriptions, commentary, or dates: only Weems' ethereal voice-over that

sonically accompanies the observer/participant through the dramatized archival encounter.

Weems' prints of Johnston's images on muslin are the focal point of the installation, and they lose their original scale and become larger-than-life, sensorial, transparent, embedded, and confrontational. If the students in Johnston's images have been instructed not to make eye contact with the observer, Weems remediates this suppression of agency by confronting the observer/participant with manipulations of scale. In order to close the visual gap between observer and subject in Johnston's work, Weems forces the observer to participate—to move through and with the photographs and engage their materiality and temporality. These archival manipulations evoke Ariella Azoulay's argument that in the face of difficult archival encounter, the observer/participant has the following recourse: to attempt understanding through "a long unbroken gaze, intermittent recurring looks, blowing it up, shrinking it, embedding it, framing it, cropping it, hanging or printing it." She goes on to say that "These actions are confessions...of the impossibility of maintaining a direct gaze between the spectator and the photograph and between the photographer and the photographed person, or --alternately -- confessions of the fundamental incapacity of the photograph to show and the spectator to see" (376). In the case of Weems' installation, scale, transparency, and suspension make a concentrated effort to *show* something purportedly absent in Johnston's photographs—the individuality of each subject, their personal and cultural histories, a politically-charged entanglement in a larger national imaginary—but also interrogate the temporal constraints of Johnston's form.

Through the accompanying oral monologue, Weems clearly identifies herself as interlocutor, observer, interpreter, and engager of the archive: "I saw you Black and Indian co-mingle/building the structure of your survival brick by brick with your own hands" and "I saw you become Hampton Alums/the graduates of a stripped people/echoes of your former selves/

hollowed relics of a former time.” Weems’ narration of her own archival encounter with Johnston’s images and Hampton’s archives directly addresses the photograph’s subjects—acknowledging their cultural and racial specificity, their strategies of survivance, and the cultural and personal loss implicit in boarding school technologies. This method of address also

engages multiple temporalities—the moments of a student’s encounter with Hampton’s ideologies and structures, the moments in which Johnston’s photograph was taken, and then moments of archival encounter, which, like Weems’ own encounter, contain multiplicitous opportunities for interpreting the past and conjecturing the future.

Weems also uses the refrain of “before” and “after” throughout her voiceover to delineate a time before colonial forces of oppression and then after their influence, suggesting a liminal space of “authenticity”: “Before dashed hopes, lost dreams & the endless weeping of women,” and yet after “the Bible, the blanket, the bottle, the bullet...” In this way, the monologue offers an alternative to colonial constructs of time as impressed on both lived experience and archival material. If colonial time-keeping requires dates, precision, and measurement, Weems offers instead the mythic “Before” and the destructive “After,” interrogating the notion of Euro-centric time-keeping as revelatory of historical trajectory. This rhetoric also evokes, however, the precarity of centering Black and Native histories on timelines of colonial contact—something the archivist of the *Hampton Album* embraces in its construction. The first twenty photos in the album are “before” and “after” comparisons: a student or a family or an Indigenous community on the left “before” Hampton’s revolutionary civilizing intercession, and an “after” photo on the right of students fully acculturated to Hampton’s ideologies of domesticity, labor, appearance, and land management. These “before” and “after” photos, however, more significantly illustrate a supposed embrace of what Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (Maori) calls “the West’s view of itself as the



centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of ‘civilized’ knowledge” (66).

Weems’ installation is also, by nature of its form, temporal: like state and institutionally-located archival encounter, its observer/participants can only generate narratives that aim to represent its resonances. After *The Hampton Project* was initially exhibited at Williams College in 2000 (and again in 2007), it travelled to the International Center of Photography in New York, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the Nelson - Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, the University Art Museum at the University of California, Long Beach, and the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College. It was most recently exhibited in part by the McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College in 2018 as part of an exhibition entitled *Carrie Mae Weems: Strategies of Engagement*. As an emphasis of its ephemerality, *The Hampton Project* in full is no longer accessible, and its components have settled into disparate archival holdings. At the time of writing, Williams College owns the most complete version of the exhibition: 26 digital photographs, 7 on canvas and 19 on muslin, and a CD, purchased in 2005, although none of these are on view (Williams Museum of Art).<sup>40</sup> This intensive temporality—as regulated by the museum site and the nature of the installation form—mirrors the intensive temporality of archival encounter.

This theorizing at work in Weems’ project points towards a re-imagining of Johnston’s archived album, with an awareness of both the tense pulse of colonialism and the echoing whisper of subversion. I suggest that Weems’ theorizing—through narrative, image, language, spatiality, and scale—points towards three strategies of decolonial archival “re-imagining”: reading against the regime of documentation and visibility as empirical, reading against stasis

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<sup>40</sup> Fragmentary installation views (available from the digital archives of Williams College Museum and Weems’ own website) are also accessible.

and immobility of the archival moment, and reading for a radical relationality that requires moving through the archive and outside the archive as a methodology capable of recognizing futurity for Black and Native people.

### **Reading Against the Regime of Documentation**

Through manipulations of scale, ordering, and transparency, *The Hampton Project* challenges the regime of visibility that dominates Hampton's carefully maintained institutional records. Weems' appropriations interrogate the idea that images—particularly those in official archives—offer up empirical truth as uncontested and immutable evidence. Rather, she suggests their infinite mutability—they can be blow-up, re-printed, re-organized, put on cloth or canvas, suspended from the ceiling, cropped, de-contextualized and re-contextualized, all radical acts of malleability that inherently transform their interpretation. To reimagine Johnston's album in light of Weems' theorizing is to read against the documentary impulse that dominated photographic representation in the late nineteenth century and instead recognize the images themselves as constructed and interpretive visions: what James Guimond calls "a White dream for Black people." I complicate Guimond's label, however, to both include American Indian students, and to suggest that Johnston's images reveal more about the White imagination at the turn of the century than they do about their Black and Native subjects.

We also must contextualize Johnston's original images within the lineage of photographic representation in the late nineteenth century, and, as Jonathan Crary urges, understand the photography "effect" as a "crucial component of a new cultural economy of value and exchange, not as part of a continuous history of visual representation" (13). In the nineteenth century, photography largely served documentary and evidential purposes, and was only

beginning to move into the realm of aesthetic representation. Photograph as evidence was connected importantly to the development of regulatory and disciplinary institutions like schools, prisons, police stations, asylums, and hospitals, and new systems of institutional and disciplinary record-keeping. As John Tagg argues, "The rhetoric of photographic documentation at this period...is therefore one of precision, measurement, calculation and proof, separating out its objects of knowledge, shunning emotional appeal and dramatisation" (11). The historical positionality of Johnston's images, then, raises questions about the regime of visibility that began to inform the definition of image as purveyor of "reality," and the observer of such image as "spectator"—a transformation made explicit by the prevalence and popularity of World Fairs and National Exhibitions.<sup>41</sup>

What happens, then, when we reimagine Johnston's images as dreams and visions of Black and Native encounter, constructed in and for the White imaginary, rather than as documentary evidence of life at Hampton? What happens when we, as Weems' project urges, pay close attention to the way Johnston's project reveals the role of visibility and documentation in nineteenth century constructions of Black and Native bodies and White anxieties concerning the consequences of their invisibility? What happens when we think about Johnston's photographs as constituted by directed performative acts with the broader institutional goal of, as Oyeronke Oyewumi writes in her work on visualizing the body in Western theory, keeping the Black and Native body "*in view and on view*" (2)?

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<sup>41</sup> For the role of world fairs and expositions in developing the culture of spectatorship and the regime of visibility in the late nineteenth century, see Lauren Rabinovitz, "'THE FAIR VIEW': Female Spectators and the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition," *The Image in Dispute*, ed. Andrew Dudley, University of Texas Press, 1997, pp.

I suggest an attention to Hampton's (and presumably Johnston's) choice of composition and arrangement—a zooming in, so to speak, on the minutiae of compositional directives—as a way to read both for and against documentary impulse and recognize the soft pulse of both coloniality and refusal at work in Johnston's archive. I also suggest attention to moments when this carefully constructed composition is ruptured: moments when a student gazes rebelliously into the camera, when a body falls out of formation, or when the institutional directives are unclear, and the White colonial dream of Black and Native submission subtly reveals the machinations of its delusion.

Johnston's photographs are formulaic: each group of students is highly posed, appearing frozen in study and movement; teachers are interspersed amongst their students or at the front of a classroom as on-lookers and observers, never participants. Despite Hampton's segregated model of education, African American and American Indian students appear together in most photographs, offering the appearance of collaborative and integrated classroom spaces. These are images that connote a pervasive silence: mouths are closed, heads are bowed, and students have clearly been instructed not to look at the camera; even instructors who appear to be in the middle of a lesson show no facial expression or indication that they have emitted sound. Johnston has placed both herself and the observer at a uniform distance from the unnamed subjects: there is an expanse of open, divisionary space between each posed vignette of classroom or field-work and the camera (Figure 3). Although a stray desk leg may transgress this space, actual human subjects remain mostly clear of this dividing band. These directed performances of studiousness and rapt attention write the Black and Native body as docile and unmoving, controlled, orderly, and static. Hampton seeks to demonstrate students' active engagement in instruction: a learning by doing, an evocation of the role of "the hand" in studies requiring "the head." And yet this

“engaged learning” also reconfigures students themselves as a form of statuary, as specimen, and as inseparable from their object of study.

This concept of student as specimen is made most obvious in an image entitled “History. Class in American History” (Figure 4). Tuhiwai-Smith outlines the connection in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries between colonial collection practices and indigeneity, describing the way European-American collectors believed they were “actually rescuing artefacts from decay and destruction, and from indigenous peoples themselves” (64). In this image, however, it is an American Indian himself who becomes the collected, arranged, and displayed artifact. At the front of the room, elevated slightly on a platform with his body turned towards the camera, stands an American Indian Hampton student in full tribal dress. Behind him on a table is a stuffed eagle and a display case of various flora and fauna, artifacts of the “natural” world. To his left, along the classroom wall, a group of students and a teacher, clutching a tribal object, stand or sit, their eyes meditatively trained on his body. While the student in the image has been identified by scholars as Louis Firetail (Sioux, Crow Creek), he is represented here not by name but as ethnographic object relegated to a comfortably distant past and displayed for academic purposes in the same way a biologist might display a piece of coral or a fossil.

The observer of the image, likewise, is invited to participate in this ethnographic gazing: we observe a triple-spectatorial encounter. We look at the students, marked by anonymity and a standardization of dress, who in turn look at Louis Firetail arranged as an immobile and fictive object of a mythologized Native past, who himself gazes outward and downward, to the right of Johnston’s camera, towards an array of empty desks. This White dream, then, is not only of submissive Black and Native identity as transformed by regulatory education and performed for the White spectator, but also a spectatorial encounter *between* Black and Native people. The

dramatization of this encounter in Johnston's photograph evokes what Zakiyyah Iman Jackson calls the "violence of humanization," or the "conditions under which black people have been *selectively incorporated* into the liberal humanist project" (46). Like slavery, which Jackson calls "a technology for producing a *kind* of human," boarding schools like Hampton functioned as disciplinary technologies deeply invested in weaponizing discourses of humanization, which resulted in cultural erasure. The violent humanization required by Hampton, as exhibited in Johnston's image of Louis Firetail, includes not only the necessary delegitimization of Native identity as ethnographic curiosity, but also the obedience of both Black and Native bodies in performing this ethnographic subordination to dominant colonial narratives of White authority—while being watched by a White observer.

In other words, a careful study of Johnston's photograph reveals not only a dehumanization of Native people like Louis Firetail, but the role performances of Black and Native humanization for a largely White audience play in the Hamptonian model. These performances evoke what Oyewumi calls "body reasoning," defined as "a biologic interpretation of the social world." As long as "social actors are presented as groups and not as individuals, and as long as such groupings are conceived to be genetically constituted, then there is not escape from biological determinism" (5). If we again remind ourselves that the tableaux Johnston has created at Hampton's behest are objects of construction, then the performative recognition of biological determinism in this particular image bears even greater significance. Notably, it is not clothing alone that the students are asked to study for the camera, or indigenous "objects" of sacred or daily use value, or images representing real or imagined indigenous people. Rather, they have been instructed to perform an observance of an actual, embodied, and recognizable fellow student: his body becomes the site of colonial knowledge production.

And yet if analyses like these reveal the atmospheric pulsing of colonialism pervading Johnston's archive and its performative complexity, then reading for moments of compositional rupture exposes the quietly vibrating tensions of refusal. I want to think of these moments of compositional rupture as a form of self-fashioning, but as Campt suggests, the very idea of self-fashioning "resists easy categorization and refuse[s] binary notions of agency versus subjection" (59). Campt goes on to ask:

What if we understand it [a subject's self-fashioning] as a tense response that is not always intentional or liberatory, but often constituted by minuscule or even futile attempts to exploit extremely limited possibilities for self-expression and futurity in/as an effort to shift the grammar of black futurity to a temporality that both embraces and exceeds their present circumstances—a practice of *living the future they want to see, now?* (59)

In Johnston's images, moments of compositional rupture do just this—they exploit the narrow range of positional, postural, and behavioral opportunities available to Black and Native students within the disciplinary structures of boarding school technology, and also within the narrower disciplinary moment of confrontation with Johnston's camera.

The second part of *The Hampton Album* includes a series of photographs of the Whittier, a school for elementary-aged students from the Hampton community, staffed by Hampton Institute's post-graduate students. Many photographs in this section indicate moments of compositional rupture—perhaps because of the age of the students, the required time it took to hold still for a camera, or the curiosity of a White woman interloper operating an expensive piece of machinery and issuing highly specific behavioral directives. In a photograph titled "Thanksgiving Day lesson at the Whittier," a group of elementary students crowds around a

wooden table and assists in building what appears to be a colonial scene: a cabin made of wooden twigs set among brush and rocks (Figure 5). Behind the group, “Thanksgiving Of The Pilgrim Fathers” is inscribed on the chalkboard. A second group of students sits in desks, their hands folded, their gazes directed towards the front of the room. Four students, however, are in defiance of the scene’s directional imperatives: they look straight into the camera, making visible their simultaneous disobedience and curiosity. Did they turn at the last minute to sneak a glance at Johnston and her machine? Were they curious to see how the camera would capture an image after a prolonged period of holding impossibly still? Or were they curious as to why they were being photographed, and for whom?

Something similar happens in the most ambitious photograph in Johnston’s album: titled “about 400 students in Memorial Chapel,” it is a feat of directorial organization and composition (Figure 6). From far away, the image looks as we imagine Hampton (and Johnston) intended it: Black and Native students are arranged in orderly rows amongst the impressive stone architecture, their faces turned towards the camera, their regulatory dress indicating submissiveness, compliance, and dedication to Hamptonian ideals. But zooming in on the image—and looking closely—reveals an extraordinary differentiation of posture and behavior, and near infinite moments of compositional rupture. Some students slump, drape arms over half-empty chairs next to them; some look to the left, some look to the right; some tilt their heads to one side to ensure capture by the camera, some rest their head in their hands; some cross their arms protectively across their chests or abdomens, while some tuck their hands under their legs; some hold papers or objects; some look into the camera menacingly, impatiently, quizzically, or with expressions of abject boredom. After this scalar adjustment of zooming in, the differentiation in student posture belies the anonymity inherent in conceptions of the



Black/Native body politic so central to Hampton's ideology. It also deconstructs the illusion of control at the heart of Johnston's project and Hampton's own self-fashioning: the idea that the bodies and minds of students could be so acculturated as to unconditionally obey institutional directives.

These ruptures echo throughout the album—and are not limited to the few examples discussed here. Their recognition complicates Johnston's album as an act of documentary evidence, and the elevation of visuality in the late nineteenth century as constitutive of empirical knowledge. Lowe and Manjapra suggest the practice of understanding “scalar designations not as given ontological structures, but rather as perspectival fictions, epistemologies that express situated knowledges and modes of apprehension” (5). This attention to scale, as theorized by Weems, highlights its role in creating these fictions of perspective that perpetuate visual institutional legacy as incontestable.

### **Reading Against Stasis: On Circulation, Mobility, and Transit**

*The Hampton Project* emphasizes narratives of transit, mobility, motion, and circulation implicit in sites of archival encounter. As Weems invites the spectator/participant to walk in and through manipulated archival material drawn from multiple sources and multiple temporalities, she draws attention not only to the constructedness of archival encounter itself, but its haptic resonances: the way a multi-sensorial engagement generates the archive's very meaning.

This attention to transit and mobility evokes Azoulay's contention concerning reading images as event: she suggests that “The photograph bears the seal of the photographic event, and reconstructing this event requires more than just identifying what is shown in the photograph” (14). Azoulay advocates for the process of “watching” images, which “entails dimensions of time and movement that need to be reinscribed in the interpretation of the still photographic image”

(14). Analyzing archival material as event requires a careful attention to a series of potential encounters: the (geo/bio) politics of document creation, archival creation, circulation, and access in multiple temporalities and spaces, as critical components of the interpretive process. This kind of reading expands from an analysis of documents, images, and material objects in and of themselves as stationary/static interpretive sites, to an interest in movement, relationship, sound, reception, presentation, and tactility—and posits that these contextual frameworks are themselves mutable in a range of temporalities and geographic positionalities.

This reading practice, as centered in Weems’ theorizing, is attentive to the sensorial multiplicities of archival encounter as part of “the” archive itself—and as a fundamental component of interpretation. It is also attentive to archival histories: the acquisition, transfer, and access of archival material, and the intersectional relationships between a commissioner (or commissioning institution), the creator(s)/author(s), a multiplicity of audiences in multiple temporalities, the subject(s), and the current institutional/archival location. Perhaps most significantly, this kind of reading foregrounds “haptics,” which Campt defines as “the multiple forms of contact and touch that characterize any encounter with a photo album,” and expands the site of engagement as the entire archive, thus redefining “archive” itself as a sensorial, multiplicitous, and mobile experience that actively implicates the observer-turned-participant in its interpretation (71).

Weems’ foregrounding of the primacy of the observer is most clear in the final image of *The Hampton Project*. Weems has photographed herself from behind, looking at a photograph by artist David Wojnarowicz of three buffalo jumping—and then falling—off a cliff, on which are overlaid the words “FROM A GREAT HEIGHT I SAW YOU FALLING/BLACK AND INDIAN ALIKE/AND FOR YOU SHE PLAYED A SORROW SONG” (Figure 7). Both images

are printed on diaphanous muslin cloth, which wavers, bends, and moves in response to observer/participant interaction: its materiality is made visible through engagement.

Weems' inclusion of her own image in her installations is not unusual: rather, it is part of her methodology, as related to her personal philosophy of artist as interlocutor and "narrator of history" (Hampton Catalogue 79). This final image in *The Hampton Project* emphatically reminds us of the artist as interlocutor: it makes visible haptic archival encounter, intersects our encounter with hers, visualizes the multiple temporalities deployed in archival engagement, localizes the regime of visibility as central to archival interpretation in colonial discourse (we look at Weems looking), and affirms the agency/responsibility of the artist-observer-turned-participant in the interpretation/circulation of narrative. It also defines Weems' installation—a visual and sonic narration of archival encounter—as a lament.

What happens, then, when we turn our attention to the creation, circulation, movement, and transit of Johnston's Hampton archive as dynamic sites implicated in interpretive process? What happens when we centralize a series of encounters—Frances Benjamin Johnston with Hampton's students, Hampton's students with Johnston's camera, the Paris Exhibition, the Hampton Album, the 1996 MOMA exhibit, and the list goes on—as a way to read against stasis?

Perhaps most importantly, what happens when we make room for the possibilities of future and decolonial encounter with Johnston's album in temporalities and geographical spaces that we can not yet even begin to dream?

Frances Benjamin Johnston visited Hampton's campus in December of 1899. According to an article in the *Southern Workman* about her visit, the campus was abuzz for almost the whole month with her presence, and the life of the school halted as it aided in the creation of her pictures (*Southern Workman* January 1900). 150 of her platinotypes traveled to the Paris

Exposition, arranged on moving leaves (Figure 8). Although the original display boards have been lost, much documentation concerning the American Negro Exhibit itself still exists, including Thomas J. Calloway's exhibition catalogue, which describes Johnston's work as constituted by "150 photographs, which were among the finest to be found anywhere in the Exposition. Hampton Institute sent them to tell the story of her work, and they served the purpose admirably" (7).

The goal of the American Negro Exhibit, according to Du Bois, who played a large part in the exhibition's organization, was to show "(a) The history of the American Negro. (b) His present condition. (c) His education. (d) His literature" (576). The exhibition—in full—contained 500 photographs, a curated display of books written by African American authors, and over 220 photographs—Johnston's included—of African American life. Also exhibited were Du Bois' graphs, maps, and charts concerning "the condition of the descendants of former African slaves now resident in the United States of America," and photographs of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute and Shaw University (not produced by Johnston).<sup>42</sup> The goal was to demonstrate to an international audience that America was "doing something" about its large population of African American freedmen—something constructive that would transform them into dutiful and responsive contributing citizens. Notably, however, no specific mention was made in the exhibit about American Indian presence, despite the prevalence of "the Indian problem" in turn-of-the-century political and educational rhetoric and the then-twenty-year duration of Hampton's Indian program. Even though a series of Johnston's photographs pointedly focus on American Indian subjects (and nearly all photographs include American

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<sup>42</sup> For "the names of exhibitors, special agents, and material" constituting the exhibition in full, see Calloway, Thomas J. "The Negro Exhibit." *Report of the Commissioner-General for the United States to the International Universal Exposition, Paris, 1900. Volume II.* U.S. Senate Document No. 232 (56th Congress, 2d Session). Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, pp.463-467.

Indian students), the exhibition's political intentions conflates American Indian and Black identity as two races benefiting, similarly and comparatively, from White educational intervention.<sup>43</sup>

After the success of the Paris Exhibition, Johnston's Hampton photographs had a brief period of circulation: they were exhibited at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901, the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition from 1901-02, and were shown in conjunction with illustrated lectures on education in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. As Sara Bassnett has noted, they also illustrated a handful of photo-essays, like Albert Shaw's in the *American Monthly Review of Reviews* from 1900, and were published in part in Hampton's primary circular, the *Southern Workman*, in addition to illustrating the academic catalogue (160). This early circulation of Johnston's images proves both the Institute's belief in their efficacy as propaganda illustrating the transformative capacities of industrial education, and the extent to which the Hampton model of education was garnering both national and international attention.

It appears as though both Johnston's name and her Hampton images fell out of circulation after 1902, and were only recovered and exhibited subsequently in 1966—after an album containing the images was found by writer and curator Lincoln Kirstein in a Washington D.C. bookstore. Kirstein gave the album to the Modern Museum of Art in New York, and 43 of the original platinum prints went on display at MOMA and subsequently traveled to eleven different museums and institutions in the United States and Canada. It was a highly controversial exhibition: although the images clearly made ideological statements about Black and Native educational and institutional positionality at the turn of the century that tied importantly to a

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<sup>43</sup> For more on Johnston's role in the Paris Exposition and the way it influenced her later career as both a portrait and education reform photographer, see Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "American Visions at the Paris Exposition, 1900: Another Look at Frances Benjamin Johnston's Hampton Photographs," *Art Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 3, 1998, pp. 60-68.

systemic legacy of oppression central to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, the exhibition made no mention of these connections. Rather, curators lined the ethereal white walls of the Edward Steichen Photography Center with small prints of Johnston's work—arranged as if on a timeline—with little contextual information beyond a brief commentary on their value as aesthetic objects (Figure 9).

Kirstein, in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, offers a sentimental interpretation of Johnston's work that approaches nostalgia. In his description of Johnston's subjects, he rhapsodizes that "Every student is caught in unstrained ease: dignity, not stiffness" and further argues that the "somber, immaculate children ache and burn to learn" (9, 11). Calling Johnston's series an "elegiac, pastoral drama," Kirstein reaches the conclusion that "Outside of Hampton there is an ogre's world of cruel competition and insensate violence, but while we are here, all the fair words that have been spoken to the outcast and injured are true. Promises are kept. Hers is the promise land" (11). Kirstein's ignorance of the contemporaneous debate concerning industrial education as well as the 1960s political landscape of Civil Rights is striking—as is the museum's blatant reappraisal of Johnston's images as aesthetic objects detached from a lineage of systemic racial oppression.<sup>44</sup>

Although the album and the images in MOMA's collection are not currently on view (and have not been in full since 1966),<sup>45</sup> the museum issued a full catalogue of the album in May of 2019 for the first time, including prints of 173 images in the sequential order designated by the original album, and accompanied by facsimiles of the titles and headings in the handwritten

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<sup>44</sup> There were only a few contemporary reviews of the 1966 exhibition. One of the most critical was from *The New York Times*, labeling the album and exhibit a "remarkable piece of precious, nostalgic propaganda." See David E. Sherman, "Things and People," *New York Times Book Review*, December 4, 1966, pp. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Five of Johnston's photographs—two from Hampton and three from Tuskegee—were exhibited in 1974 by John Szarkowski at MOMA. The exhibition was titled *Photographs from the Harvard Social Ethics Collection*. See MOMA's press release, "Photographs From Harvard on View at Museum," June 21, 1974.

script of the album's original archivist. The reissued, revised album makes plain for the first time that some of the images archived in the album are not Johnston's—she never traveled West, and the images of Indian Reservations positioned in before-and-after sequences at the beginning of the album were taken by an anonymous photographer.<sup>46</sup> Both Sarah Hermanson Meister, curator of the Department of Photography at MOMA and LaToya Ruby Frazier, an American photographer and professor at the Institute of Chicago, assert the historical significance of the album in their introductory essays, but take a far less nostalgic view than Kirstein: Meister views the printing of the catalogue as “a new opportunity to interrogate some of the historical biases and lacunae in our scholarship,” and Frazier argues that Johnston's images “reveal more about the intentions of the founder of the institution, the funders of the commission, and the audience for these photographs than they do about their subjects or the photographer who took them” (8, 25). Meister also notes new discoveries concerning the production of the album Kirstein found: museum conservationists located a page of the December *Southern Workman* from 1900 crumpled in the spine of the book, indicating that the album was likely assembled at Hampton just after the Paris Exposition. Archivists have also identified the handwriting as likely belonging to Cora Folsom, the “Indian Correspondent” at Hampton, suggesting that the album—considering its post-Paris Exposition construction—served an official archival purpose as institutional documentation and “record” (18).

This attention to circulation and transit reveals the clear propagandistic power Hampton as institution saw in Johnston's photographs, and the geographic ground that their contemporaneous exhibition covered. It also reveals the historical moments in which Johnston's

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<sup>46</sup> The identity of this secondary photographer—whose work is far inferior to Johnston's—remains unknown. I speculate that it may have been Folsom herself, due to her well-documented trips to Western reservations in order to check on the “status” of returned students.

work has been resurrected—during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and again in 2019, amidst a repetitious series of police violences against Black people, the rule of an overtly racist American president, and the continued denial of systemic racism as the foundation of American ideologies. MOMA’s publication of the album for the first time in full appears to be a remediation for past sins of misrepresentation—and an acknowledgement of the way display in White cultural museum spaces has distorted Johnston’s work.

Unsurprisingly, Johnston’s photographs have only been displayed in White public spaces, where the ethnographic gaze of the spectator is invited to uncritically engage with a decontextualized history of racialization and the technologies of selective “humanization.” Zoe Todd (Métis) defines these locations as “space in which Indigenous ideas and experiences are appropriated, or obscured, by non-Indigenous practitioners” (243). She goes on to argue that decolonization “requires that we change not only who is spoken about and how, but also *who is present* in intellectual and artistic “buildings” (251). Ultimately, Todd calls for a reconfiguration of public and cultural space that includes Native people not just as the subjects of paintings, photographs, and literary texts, but as the creators and critics—the engineers of their own representation.

The conflation of Hampton’s complex institutional history as a site of Native and Black engagement into “Afro-American” history by institute archivists, the curators of the Paris Exhibition, and the curators of MOMA exhibitions, evokes Todd’s argument. It is notable that Carrie Mae Weems, a Black American artist, was alone invited to respond to Johnston’s photographs FOOTNOTE; it’s also notable that LaToya Ruby Frazier—a Black photographer and professor—was alone invited to write an evaluative essay to accompany MOMA’s 2019 publication. To recognize the role of Johnston’s album and its transit as institutional and



systemic propaganda in the history of Native erasure, is an act that begins the work of reimagining the archive—and looking forward to new possibilities for decolonial archival encounter.

### **Reading for Radical Relationality**

In Hampton University's denouncement of *The Hampton Project*, museum curator Jeanne Zeidler wrote that Carrie Mae Weems did not conform to "Hampton's approach to using historical information and cultural materials" (77). While Weems' original commission involved revisiting Johnston's photographs, the finished project includes archival material from Hampton's broader archives, the archives of Williams College, and Weems' own collection. In other words, Weems invites the observer/participant to make connections between Johnston's photographic record and systemic racial violences as recorded in archival documentation—the KKK, evangelism in Indigenous communities, the promulgation of Indigenous stereotypes, and Civil Rights era protests. She invites us to see a radical relationality both between the images used in her project, and beyond the images: into documentary records that connect boarding school technologies to a broader narrative of inequity and injustice. This serves as a sharp contrast to Hampton's careful ordering of Johnston's images, and the institutional narrative that they so laboriously perform. If Johnston's album is focused on chronology, spatial ordering, and providing a viewer with a clear before/after temporality, then Weems interrogates these categories as participants in the colonality of knowledge, and instead advocates for a radical relationality between document, archive, encounter, and lived experience.

What happens when we apply this theorizing to a re-reading of Johnston's archive? Rather than obey institutional directives of spatial ordering, scale, arrangement,

chronology, and sequence, what happens (and what we can see) when we zoom in and zoom out, reorder, dis-sequence, and network images beyond their frames as a decolonial act? What narratives might emerge from the cracks of disorder? What intersections might we discover when we begin to connect Johnston's archive to other archival materials and forms of documentation? Lisa Lowe and Kris Manjapra advocate for an analytic of relationality that transforms both method and disciplinary constraints within archival analysis:

A different humanities based in the analytic of relationality invites a total rethinking of discipline and method. Forging alternatives to the coloniality of knowledge, institutionalized in the very methods of the humanities and the history of the university, requires not only an analytic of relation, but also a rethinking of the archive, which may involve new readings of traditional archives, or finding alternative repositories and practices of knowledge and collection. We ponder what it means to 'recover' historical pasts for which there is no or little documentation or evidence (7).

I suggest that an intentional disordering of Johnston's archive does just this: moves towards the hesitant recovery of historical pasts for which documentation is sparse, fleeting, and inconclusive. Using radical relationality as a framework—connecting Johnston's images to outside documentation—and re-reading *The Hampton Album* with the intent to re-scale, disorder, and dis-sequence, yields narratives that whisper of the tensions between coloniality and subversion and the mobility that impacted Black and Native women's lives in the early twentieth century.

Johnston's archive relies on the rubric of anonymity. The students in group photos are not individually identified and are rather labeled only by the subject matter of study. In the interest of reinforcing a visuality of biological determinism, students are reduced to academic

disciplines and classification, participants in a system that emphasizes the collective body politic over individuality. Even the few student portraits at the beginning of the album labeled by name are positioned as before/after narratives: the emphasis is on the transformative capabilities of Hamptonian ideologies, rather than the individual specificities of personal expression. Re-reading the album with the intent to disorder not only sequence but also ideology, requires a focus on recovering individuality, and reading for the way individual lived experience travels across the archive and counters performative stasis. Recovering individuality within the rubric of radical relationality is a decolonial act—it defies institutional imperative that seeks to divest students of tribal/community connection in order to forge an anonymity dictated by biological determinism.

When reading for a recovery of individuality that can be networked beyond the album, two particular students are significant in that their presence can be tracked in multiple photos throughout Johnston's archive: Ada Bradley, a kindergarten teacher at Whittier's teaching practicum and a post-graduate student in the class of 1900, and Adele Quinney, a Native student from the Oneida/Stockbridge tribe. Considering fragmentary state and institutionally located documentation of Ada and Adele's lives alongside Johnston's images reveals a relationality between image, institutional record, and existent documentation that belies the single archival moment as static and immobile. Through centering narratives of transit—through archives, across archives, and beyond archives—it complicates monolithic narratives of Black and Native identity in the early twentieth century.

In Johnston's album, Ada Bradley is depicted in at least three separate photographs: in the front row of a group of 400 seated students in Hampton's Memorial Chapel, her hands folded in her lap and her eyes directly addressing the camera (Figure 10); in an image of kindergarten

students practicing washing and ironing, her arm gently tucked around a reluctant young boy's shoulders (Figure 11); and in a group photo of the post-graduate class of 1900, her fingers laced on her lap, and her eyes confrontationally trained on the camera (Figure 12). To read between these images, is to notice Ada's composure: she sits with the same posture of her head in both group photographs, slightly tilted to the left, shoulders relaxed, and hands in her lap. Yet what is so striking when reading across these two images is her direct stare into Johnston's camera lens: while some of her classmates gaze to the right or left of Johnston, or exhibit wry half-smiles, Ada's address of the camera is confrontational, unwavering, and even impatient.

In the photograph with her kindergarten students, Ada stands at the head of a table, her left hand resting on the brim of a white bowl, presumably holding water, and her right hand rests on the shoulder of one of her pupils, who stares straight ahead instead of at the practiced task at hand. It is not difficult to imagine that kindergarten students may find the charge of holding still for a stranger-photographer's camera lens a near-impossible task: Ada's eyes are directed downwards, focusing on the bowl—and the student's unpredictable hands—that seem to risk ruining the composure of this lesson in domesticity. Reading across archives, however, indicates that Ada was likely well-prepared for this task: by the time she got to Hampton, she had already completed a two-year course of study at the Buffalo Free Kindergarten Training School in Buffalo, New York. She also had success at Hampton: she was repeatedly selected to represent the school at the annual Hampton Negro Conference as a Kindergartener, and she would stay on to teach at the Whittier school until 1908 (Virginia School Journal, Hampton Course Catalogue 1900-1908).

Identifying and tracking the student/teacher in question as Ada Bradley requires a reliance on a variety of archival materials located in state and institutional collections: issues of

the *Southern Workman*, which note her role in the Whittier kindergarten from 1900-1908, as well as an announcement of her marriage; census records from the US government that track the development of her family, the birth of her children, her husband's profession, and her family's roots/route; scholarly books about her son, Dudley Randall, a poet and pioneer of the Broadside Press, and finally an obituary in the Baltimore Afro-American newspaper, which delineates the community resonances of her legacy. What emerges from these archival materials is the fragmentary paper trail of a life, which speaks largely to early twentieth century documentation practices concerning Black women's mobility. But it also forces us to connect Johnston's archive to the world beyond—to find resonances of systemic injustices and coloniality, but also the quiet tension of resistance and subversion.

Per her wedding certificate, Ada Bradley was born in Boston in 1879 to Scipio and Ada Bradley. According to the Hampton Course Catalogue, she attended the Buffalo Free Kindergarten Training School in Buffalo, New York, a two-year course, and came to Hampton as a post-graduate to teach kindergarten at the Whittier School. On June 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1908, she was married to Arthur G.C Randall in Memorial Chapel at Hampton, and moved to Columbus, Georgia, where Arthur was the secretary of the Black Y.M.C.A. According to census records, Ada was living in Muscogee, Georgia in 1910; sometime after 1910, the couple moved to Baltimore where Arthur was a minister at the People's Congregational United Church of Christ in Washington, D.C. In 1920, the family was living in St. Clair Illinois; and in 1930, they were living in Detroit. In 1964, Ada died in Detroit at the age of 84—just one month after the signing of the Civil Rights Act. Her brief obituary in the Baltimore Afro-American newspaper heralded her as the “first non-white kindergarten teacher in the US,” and said she “established a model

kindergarten on a limited budget in Baltimore,” although evidence of this school is difficult to find in documentary record.

According to census records and death certificates, Ada had seven children—one, a son, was stillborn, and another son, Philip, died at age fourteen of spinal meningitis. Of her surviving children, Dudley Randall, a middle son, would become a famed poet, member of the Black Arts Movement, and pioneer of the Broadside Press, which published writers like Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker, and Audre Lorde. He was named as Michigan Poet Laureate in 1981. Ada’s only daughter, Esther Lamarr, became the first woman appointed as special assistant to the head of the Veteran’s Administration by Lyndon B. Johnson, and she held this post until her death in 1967.

Ada’s transit between geographies—Virginia to South Georgia to Baltimore and finally to Detroit—evokes the Great Migration, and her designation of “none” under “profession” in all existing census records evokes the limited economic opportunities available to even traditionally educated Black women in the first half of the twentieth century. Archival records on Ada’s life reveal other moments of disturbing relationality: her happy wedding announcement in *The Washington Bee* detailing her chosen decorations and the outfits of her wedding party, is followed by the headline: “ELEVEN LYNCHED. THREE WHITES SLAIN IN A TEXAS RACE WAR. MOB STORMS JAIL, HANGS FIVE BLACKS ON ONE LIMB, SHOOTS ANOTHER.” This contrast between Ada’s hopeful future as a graduate of an institute and ideology that preached the economic possibilities of Black acculturation—and the realities of racially motivated violence plaguing the South (to which Ada and her new husband would return) haunts her archive and belies Hamptonian propaganda. If Hampton mobilized Ada’s image to illustrate supposedly innovative teaching practices, the regimented appearance of its

post-graduate students, and the mass compliance of their student body, then foregrounding Ada's image to read *beyond* this purpose is to recover a paper trail that points to moments of happiness—as well as moments of undeniable tension between expectation and reality.

Another student identifiable in Johnston's album is Adele Quinney Pedersen. Adele's identification is aided by the archivist of the Hampton album: on page 45, a portrait of Adele in dark Victorian dress, seated upright in a wooden chair, her hands folded in her lap, and her eyes addressing the camera, is positioned opposite "Cracking Wing. Gros Ventre Tribe. On arrival at Hampton" (Figure 13). For the Hampton archivist, Adele represents the "after" effects of a transformative Hampton education—the ability of the school to retrain the "savage" via the stratagems of acculturation, as made visible to the White spectator. Adele's photo is labeled: "Adele Quinney. Stockbridge Tribe. A girl whose every physical measurement is artistically correct." The archivist aestheticizes Adele as as both object and physical specimen—a representation of gendered Nativeness that meets the abstract qualifications of White, Western beauty.

Adele appears in at least four additional photographs included in Johnston's album. On page 76, Adele is one of the students asked to study Louis Firetail as ethnographic specimen on page 77, Adele can be seen wearing a broad-brimmed hat, observing a canon during a history class at Fort Monroe (Figure 14); on page 94, Adele sits in the second row of a geography class, as a teacher displays photographs of Cathedral Towns (Figure 15), and on page 95, Adele sits in the front row of another geography class, studying a globe balanced in her left hand (Figure 16). Reading across these images—removed from the album's careful chronology—makes visible a striking similarity in Adele's posturing: in most images her head is tilted slightly downward, her

eyes downcast; in the photograph with Louis Firetail, she appears to pointedly avoid his face: rather, she directs her gaze downwards, her left hand braced on a desk.

Reading outside of Johnston's archive requires an examination of the same types of state and institutionally-located documentation that exists for Ada Bradley Randall: US census records, and Hampton publications like the *Southern Workman*. Piecing together this fragmentary documentation reveals that Adele Pearl Quinney was born in 1884 in Gresham, Wisconsin. In 1900, she was listed on a US census form as 16 years old—a member of the Oneida from Wisconsin, with an Oneida father and a White/Indian mother. According to Hampton's records, Adele was from the Stockbridge tribe, and attended the Institute from 1897 until her graduation in 1901. She was a post-graduate between the years of 1902-1903, and graduated from the normal school in 1903.

On June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1904, Adele began working at Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School in Michigan as an assistant seamstress, for the salary of \$300.00 a month (Reports of the Department of the Interior 1905). Per an announcement in the *Southern Workman*, she married Carl Adolph Pedersen, a White man trained in agriculture, on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1906 in Shawano, Michigan. According to census records, the couple lived in Blackbird Township in Thurston, Nebraska in 1910, where the couple's children, Madeline (1908) and Carl Benner (1910) were both born. In 1912, according to the *Southern Workman*, Adele was teaching at a school in Martinez, California, a town located about 32 miles northeast of San Francisco. In 1913, another *Southern Workman* article indicates that Adele's husband was a "farmer for four small reservations" and Adele taught in a day school in Riverside, California. In 1917, the family was living in Yavapai, Arizona, and Carl was drafted to serve in WWI. In 1920, census records list the family as still living in Yavapai, with Carl employed as an oil pumper. By 1930, the family



had moved to Socorro, New Mexico—an agricultural community along the Rio Grande. Adele died in Socorro in 1932 of botulism, at the age of 52. She was listed as “White” on her death certificate.

Adele’s transit—from Wisconsin, to Virginia, to Michigan, to Nebraska, California, Arizona, and then finally New Mexico—shadows the development of Indian industrial schools and the continuing establishment of reservation lands across the South and Southwest in the early twentieth century. Adele lived and worked near the Menominee Indian Reservation in Shawano, the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial School in Mt. Pleasant, the Sherman Institute in Riverside, the Omaha Reservation in Thurston, the Middle Verde Indian Reservation in Yavapai, and the historic homelands of the Piro Pueblo in Socorro. If her image was used by Hampton to project a Native type that met the standards of White-Western beauty and acculturation, then foregrounding Adele’s image to read beyond Johnston’s album is to consider the geopolitical histories of early twentieth century Native removal and erasure, as tied to the specificities of small communities throughout the nation.

Reading both Ada and Adele outside of the ideological imperatives and institutional violences of *The Hampton Album* points towards both the possibilities of archival relationality. Lowe and Manjapra critique the limits of pursuing “a revisionist history that would aim to correct dominant narratives by making them more comprehensive or inclusive,” and suggests that we might “instead reflect upon the possibilities and limits of the historical archive, and explore alternatives in the face of what the archive does not yield” (16). In line with this thinking, I want to be careful to separate the pursuit of archival relationality—looking through and beyond the archive for systemic connection—from the impossible task of emending

institutional narrative. In fact, as I argue Weems suggests, it is in the limits of the archive that the pulsing tension between coloniality and resistance is most tangible.

### **Reimagining Archives as a Project of Recovery**

In *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, Saidiya Hartman observes that “Every historian of the multitude, the dispossessed, the subaltern, and the enslaved is forced to grapple with the power and authority of the archive and the limits it sets on what can be known, whose perspective matters, and who is endowed with the gravity and authority of historical actor” (xiii). In the wake of land dispossession, slavery, segregation, the denial of sovereignty, miscegenation, assimilative education, and a biological racism that undergirds it all, this question resonates: how do we encounter and read the resultant archives that whisper of omission and manipulation from the margins? Black and Native intersectional history particularly suffers from the epistemological foundations of archival practices—and yet at the same time, a consideration of encounter, circulation, and relationality evokes possibilities for alternate epistemologies that have the capacity to reimagine historical trajectory. Reimagining the archival site as multi-temporal event, contextualizing its classificatory impulses as political, refocusing the haptics of encounter, examining the geopolitics of institution and location, searching for the collusion/dissension of private, oral, tribal, and lost archives, considering access—and denial of access—as an integral part of form, are all places to begin.

And yet what might it mean to consider a haptic and relational re-reading of “the” archive, per Weems’ model, both as an alternative to state/imperial/institutional collections and as an act of recovery? As an active space of dissent, this archival reimagining interrogates the regime of visibility and the primacy of documentation (tribal rolls, bills of sale, congressional

reports) on which the dispossession of Black and Native peoples is centered. Yet at the same time, any archival reimagining contains multitudes: as much as it critiques archival and institutional form (the educational site/the museum/the spatial archive), it benefits from its cultural intelligibility. This multiplicitousness raises an important question: Can this reimagining—with a sensitivity to both Black feminist and Indigenous epistemologies—use materiality and documentation to counter archival empiricism, while maintaining a space for what is culturally and historically intransmittable?

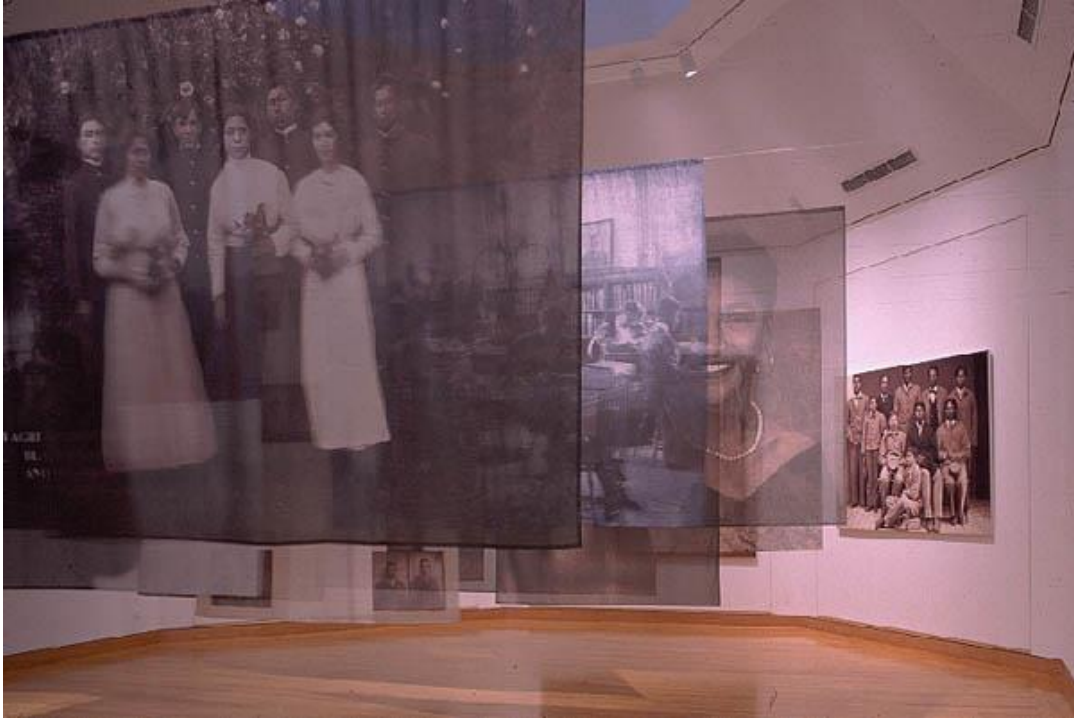
In “History Hesitant,” Lowe describes the project of historical recovery, particularly as pertaining to the presence of enslaved persons and histories, as a paradox, as:

...a divergence either between the affirmation of the recovered presence of enslaved people and the many terrains of freedom struggle, or the refusal of the temptations of recovery, owing to suspicions that not only modern positivist methods of historical recovery, but also the promises of liberal political enfranchisement to emancipate and redeem, risk subjecting the enslaved to the dominant terms under which they had so long suffered and within which they have been deemed lacking, indebted, or failed (85).

The project of recovery, then, exists at a precarious crossroads: the whispered promises of “redemption” and “freedom” are often as great as the threat of uncovering and recirculating images, language, and documents that continue to subjugate—and all in the name of pursuing empirical knowledge. Lowe consequently suggests framing recovery as a question rather than an absolute tradition, in an effort to avoid “reproducing the very forms of violent erasure that are the signature of the regime of liberal freedom,” and encourages us to also consider what it might mean to “supplement forgetting with new narratives of affirmation and presence” (98). These new narratives can run orthogonal to, intersect, contradict, dissent with, confirm, deny, and

confront the project of hesitant recovery, while challenging the lexicon of disenfranchisement so often recirculated by recovery projects, with new vocabularies of personhood and subjectivity.

In-line with Lowe's thinking, I do not mean to outline an archival reimagining as governed by a strict methodology, or bound by regulatory impulse—nor to negate the slippages and tensions of archival analysis—but to suggest this practice as existing in a hesitant space: as a terrain of possibility. I mean to assert the reimagined archive, like Johnston's, as participant in the act of world-making, a tool in resisting the colonial violences of erasure and marginalization, and a practice with the capacity to affirm (always already-existing and active) Indigenous presence in Euro-Afro-centric histories—to monumentally redefine intersectional experience in the national imaginary. The hesitant project of reimagining archives has the capaciousness to affirm—rather than deny, dismiss, negate, or obliterate—futurity for Black and Native people.



*Figure 2 Carrie Mae Weems, The Hampton Project Installation View, 2000. Williams College Museum of Art.*



*Figure 3 Carrie Mae Weems, The Hampton Project. Installation View. 2000. Williams College Museum of Art.*



*Figure 4 Frances Benjamin Johnston. Hampton Album. "Class in Dressmaking." 1900. MOMA.*



*Figure 5 Frances Benjamin Johnston. Hampton Album. "Class in American History." 1900. MOMA.*

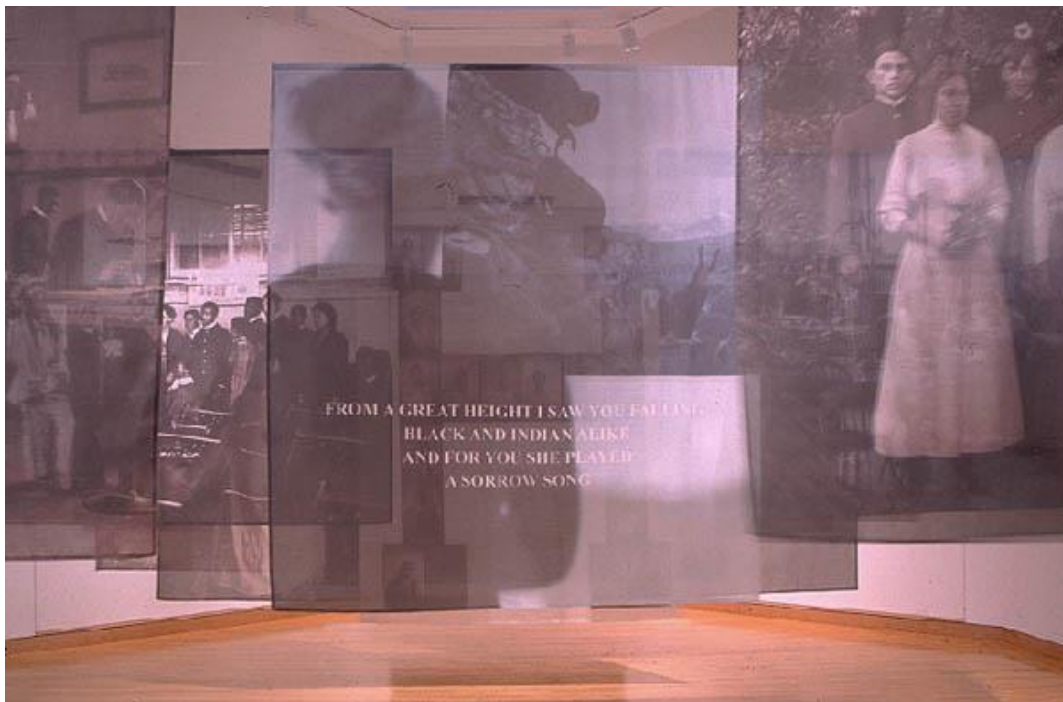




Figure 6 , Frances Benjamin Johnston. *"Thanksgiving Day Lesson at the Whittier."* 1900. MOMA.



*Figure 7 Frances Benjamin Johnston. "About 400 Students in Memorial Chapel." 1900. MOMA.*



*Figure 8 Carrie Mae Weems, The Hampton Project. Installation View. 2000. Williams College Museum of Art.*



*Figure 9 American Negro Exhibit, Paris Exposition, 1900.*



*Figure 10 MOMA's Hampton Album Exhibition View, 1966.*





*Figure 11 Up-close image of Ada Bradley, center, in Johnston's "About 400 Students in Memorial Chapel." 1900. MOMA.*



*Figure 12 Frances Benjamin Johnston. Hampton Album. "Kindergarten Children washing and ironing." 1900. MOMA.*



*Figure 13 Up-close image of Ada Bradley, center, in Johnston's "Post-graduate class of 1900." 1900. MOMA.*





*Figure 14 Frances Benjamin Johnston. "Adele Quinney." 1900. MOMA.*





*Figure 15 Frances Benjamin Johnston. "History. A Class at Fort Monroe." 1900. MOMA.*



*Figure 16 Frances Benjamin Johnston. "Geography. Studying the Cathedral Towns." 1900. MOMA.*



*Figure 17 Frances Benjamin Johnston. "Geography. Studying the Seasons." 1900. MOMA*

#### 4 INDIGIENIZING ARCHIVAL FICTIONS: LEANNE HOWE'S *MIKO KINGS*

...no matter what physical evidence Indians have,  
our stories are thought to be myth.

-LeAnne Howe

I have to keep a record. I am not writing about what I wore and who hurt my feelings. I am  
writing about the future, while it is happening.

-Angie Morril, Eve  
Tuck, and the Super Futures  
Haunt Collective

#### Reinscribing Indigenous Histories: Towards a Decolonial Archival "Fiction"

In her series entitled *1800 Crow Peace Delegation*, Indigenous visual artist Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke, Crow) mediates the viewer's archival encounter with settler-colonial photographic record through a direct inscription of revisionist history. The archival objects with which Red Star negotiates are ten black and white portraits taken by American photographer Charles Milton Bell. The photographs feature six Crow chiefs, styled in traditional Crow dress, who traveled from Montana Territory to Washington D.C. in 1800 to discuss the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad through Crow land. Bell's original images evoke nineteenth century imaginaries of the "noble" and stoic "savage," and as such have been broadly circulated: available from the Library of Congress's digital archive, they have been historically used in textbooks, advertisements, and US government publications to reinforce both pan-Indian stereotype and a history of cultural erasure.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Most recently, Bell's photograph of Peelatchiwaaxpáash was used by the Coca-Cola Company to advertise a flavor of Honest Tea called "First Nation Organic Peppermint Herbal Tea." Wendy Red-Star first saw the image in a Los Angeles grocery store in 2004. See Wendy Red Star and Shannon Vittoria, "Apsáalooke Bacheeítuuk

Through annotations in corrective red ink, Red Star both encounters and revises the settler-colonial archival and photographic record: on an ink-jet printed image of Peelatchiwaaxpáash/Medicine Crow seated in a  $\frac{3}{4}$  position in traditional Crow dress, the artist has outlined the chief's hair extensions, ermine robes, brass rings, pompadour, and eagle feather fan, among other elements of dress and styling (Figure 1). Using a system of written annotations and arrows, Red Star inscribes cultural and contextual notes in the space surrounding the figure: she records Peelatchiwaaxpáash's marital history, the names of his mother and father, his history as a successful war leader, and the details about the symbolic elements of dress that reveal his positionality and authority as a Chief of his people. She also notes Lt. John Bourke's comment concerning his dress: "Medicine Crow, the Crow chief, looked like a devil in his war bonnet, furs, and buffalo horns." This terse comment illustrates settler colonial perception of Indigeneity, and emphasizes the way in which Red Star's annotations become a decolonial intercession in archival encounter—both ours and hers.

This intercession both contextualizes these images of Native dispossession and stereotype within a broader context of culturally-specific Crow history, and situates their resonances—their possibilities of interpretation—within Crow geographies of time and space. This mediated archival encounter also questions the reliability of the optic as evidentiary, and a settler colonial reliance on visibility—as revealed in the popularity of photographic images of "Indians" beginning in the nineteenth century—as the pathway to empirical truth. Most significantly, through Red Star's intercession, the Native photographic "object" becomes a moving body in space: a subject connected to other subjects, part of a lineage, divergent from Western European interpretive structures, and evidently in relation to the material and

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in Washington, DC: A Case Study in Re-Reading Nineteenth-Century Delegation Photography," *Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art*, Fall 2020, online.

imaginative world in complex and culturally-specific ways. In other words, the Native photographic “object” becomes a “subject” connected intimately and intricately to *story*.

Oklahoma Choctaw writer LeAnne Howe has written extensively about the power of story, particularly a genre she terms “tribalography.” Defined as a “story that links Indians and non-Indians in an expanding global covenant chain,” Howe notes its inherent complexity: “Uneasy tensions ensue. Of course. Not always happy, most certainly, but inevitable for a good story” (Choctalking 36). As both an Indigenous genre and methodology, Howe further explains that tribalography “comes from the native propensity for bringing things together, for making consensus, and for symbiotically connecting one thing to another” (Choctalking 31). Through tribalography, “story” becomes separated from the limiting constructs of Western-European “narrative” as tied to plot, linearity, and chronology, and instead emphasizes interconnectivity and relationality. *Story* becomes a meditation on fraught and fluctuating settler colonial and Native relationship, with close attention paid to moments of intersection, interdependency, and mutualism. The end goal, however, is not a neoliberal dreamscape of uncritical harmony and union, but a recognition of the way non-Indian and Indian interconnectivity shades the nuances of storytelling and its effects on both space and time.

Howe’s 2007 novel, *Miko Kings: An American Baseball Story*, is a tribalography that reinscribes and recovers Indigenous histories in the face of settler-colonial erasure: Howe focuses on a culturally-specific Choctaw history of baseball, spatiality, and Black/Native encounter in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Howe’s archival intercession, however, takes a different shape than Red Star’s: by decolonizing the novel form through the creation of an Indigenized archival encounter, Howe mediates the connection between materiality and immateriality, Western European “narrative” and Choctaw “story,” and posits

this mediation as an antidote to colonial empiricism. Through the structuring inclusion of maps, reimagined newspaper articles, a character's journal, a letter, photographs, a film still, and oral narrative voiced by a returned ancestor, the novel itself becomes a haptic and archival encounter that runs orthogonal to established national histories and interrogates the epistemological foundations of colonial knowledge and research. At the intersection of Western European spacetime and Choctaw spacetime, Howe interrogates the possibilities of the novel form to both indigenize archival futurities and critique the role of narrative in historiography.

Howe's historical interventions focus on late nineteenth century Ada, a town in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), which Howe writes with a geographical complexity: she acknowledges Black presence in Indian Territory, evoking Ada's history as a "sundown" town,<sup>48</sup> its overrun by White settlers clamoring for land, Choctaw and Chickasaw resistance to allotment and impending statehood, and the way Black, Indian, and White people negotiated an increasingly complex and shared spatiality. Howe's novel also rejects linearity: instead, it moves in and out of time according to Choctaw epistemologies governing the connections between language, spatiality, and temporality. The novel moves from a narrative located in 2006, and centered on Choctaw journalist Lena Coulter and her exploration of family history through both her own archival research and conversations with a returned ancestor, Ezol Day, to Choctaw baseball player Hope Little Leader's time spend in a nursing home in 1969, and then to the psychological space of Hope's memory and his years spent at Hampton Normal School for Blacks and Indians. Hope's memories emphasize his love affair with the Indian/Black/French Hampton teacher's assistant Justina, and his time playing for a baseball team, the Miko Kings.

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<sup>48</sup> So-called "sun-down towns," established primarily during the Great Migration, were all-White towns where Black people were legally not allowed after sunset. They were an oftentimes violent form of Black exclusion. Ada's history as a sundown town is difficult to recover through archival material, and is mostly preserved in oral record. See "After Negroes in Ada, I.T." *Arkansas City Daily Traveler*, March 30, 1904, pp. 1.

The novel then moves to episodes narrated from the point of view of Algernon Pinchot, a Black Assistant Professor at Morehouse College, and his interview of a much older Justina in 1969 New Orleans.

All of Howe's characters are deeply interwoven: Lena discovers through her research and Ezol's narrative that her grandmother, Cora (MourningTree) Bolin was responsible for Ezol's death and that Ezol should have been Lena's grandmother; Hope is referenced repeatedly in Justina's 1969 narration to Algernon Pinchot, and is discovered to be the father of her only child; Algernon Pinchot marries Hope and Justina's granddaughter, Evangeline, and becomes embedded himself in their family lineage. Within these familial and geographic histories, Howe also tells stories about Choctaw/Black experience: Hope spends three years under the tutelage of Hampton's ideological structures where he meets Justina; Hope and Justina's love affair and Justina's later presence in Indian Territory invokes the racial violence of the Klu Klux Klan, causing a pregnant Justina (unbeknownst to Hope) to flee and re-assert her identity as "Black Juice"—a radical member of the Black Nationalist movement.

Most radically, Howe has moved towards decolonizing the novel form itself—a fixture of Western-European literary tradition—according to Choctaw concepts of spacetime, as generated by Choctaw language. Her approach is not a mere departure from linearity and chronology—a writerly tactic employed by many White and European "post-modern" or contemporary authors—nor is it a speculative fiction that posits the reactionary results of past or future change. In *Miko Kings*, Howe creates instead what I term an archival "fiction": a multimodal text that is itself a material archival encounter, and treats its "fiction"—the understanding between a writer and reader that what they are about to engage is not true—as a question rather than a proclamation. Archival "fiction," rather, acknowledges the novel itself as artifact: a tangible



object and act of narrative, complicit with photography, land deeds, newspaper articles, and tribal rolls in legislating identity. At the same time, however, archival “fiction” suggests that the novel—decolonized and indigenized—can be manipulated to do more than these static archival fragments. It asks: what happens when the text itself is recognized as material object in the continual state of happening, unfolding, *occurring*? What happens when the alphabetic is disrupted by the oral, the visual, the tactile, and the aesthetic? What happens when the haptics of engaging a text are made visible, when the novel *changes itself* as it unfolds?

I argue that Howe’s archival “fiction” at once recognizes the possibilities of materiality as documentation, but negotiates its reliability within a non-linear chronology paralleled by private memory and orality. By shaping the text through material archival images and documents—both real and invented—Howe reimagines the novel form as a multisensorial archival encounter with the ability to change both space and time. Howe’s posits what would be considered historical improbabilities according to institutional record: she places her protagonist, Hope Little Leader, a Choctaw, at Hampton, when no Choctaw were recorded as enrolled at the Institute throughout the duration of the school’s 23-year Indian program. She posits a love affair between Hope and his Black/Indian/French teacher, Justina—a love affair that Hampton official record indicates could never have happened. These moments of “impossibility” according to institutional record represent more than the creative strategies of “fiction”: within the formal workings of Howe’s novel archive, they interrogate the silences, aporia,<sup>49</sup> and eclipse of the state/institutional archive, and suggest what it might mean to Indigenize archival encounter alongside Black and Choctaw intersectional experience. They also suggest the possibilities of the

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<sup>49</sup> I use this term in loose reference to Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever*, and the idea that the archive has the capacity to erase and obfuscate historical event and object, and even the traces of its own archivization. In this sense, Derrida terms “archive fever” as verging on a “radical evil” (20). See *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, University of Chicago Press, 1998.

novel form for reimagining and decolonizing subsequent archival narratives, and suggest new ways to consider the past as an active component of both the present and the future, which are all already unfolding simultaneously, in conjunction with encounter itself.

It is important to remember, however, that Howe's decolonial act—her particular methodology of archival “fiction”—is specifically Choctaw, shaped through Choctaw epistemologies concerning time, space, and language, and cannot be understood as a pan-Indigenous methodology. In other words, when encountering Howe's archival “fiction,” an awareness of historical Choctaw relationship to archival methodology, and the nuances of Choctaw language and its connection to what Howe terms “spacetime,” is a necessary foundation for positing the extent of *Miko Kings*' decolonial reach.

### **On Indigeneity, Archives, and the Politics of Erasure**

A more nuanced discussion of Howe's engagement with “archives” cannot be divorced from a broader conversation about the fraught relationship between “Indigeneity” and “the archive.” Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) describes the colonial and Imperial “obsession with the tribal past” as perpetuated in photographs that turned American Indians into “museum collections” (413). This positionality of American Indian communities in Imperial ideology as archival curiosities belies the reality of American Indians as archivists themselves, with culturally and nationally specific epistemologies and connected record-keeping practices. Alyssa Mt. Pleasant, Carolina Wigginton, and Kelly Wisecup note that Native communities have a tense relationship with archival practices and the collection of “artifacts”: objects, texts, and ideas of cultural and tribal significance, through Imperial archival strategies, have become “archival objects” and “were frequently obtained in contexts of duress or without permission; they were nearly always enfolded into colonialist narratives that aimed to determine the meaning of

Indigenous writing and actions” (415). Mt. Pleasant et al. advocate for an archival expansion that includes “tribal libraries, oral histories, and community members” as well as a recognition that most nations maintain private collections and repositories (whether physical or oral) of family stories that document “interactions with empires and nations” and describe “the effects of colonialism and the survival of Native peoples” (419).

A critical approach to Howe’s text must be culturally specific, and should consider Choctaw epistemologies governing record-keeping, documentation, storytelling, and archival practices and the way these practices interact/dissent with colonial methodologies. The early history of the Choctaw Nation in colonial record has been largely shaped firstly by the writings of French explorers, and subsequently through the language of treaties, traders, ethnographers, and anthropologists. Academic understandings of eighteenth-century Choctaw cultural practices and society are mostly based on the writings of White anthropologist, folklorist, and linguist John Swanton, and paralleled by the work of Angie Debo and Muriel Wright: premiere historians of the Choctaw in the early and mid-twentieth century.

As Patricia Galloway notes, the colonial imperative of literacy and linguistic/image-based record has significantly affected Choctaw record-keeping methodologies (73). Writing specifically about the Mississippi Choctaw, Galloway explains that while legends, traditions, and cultural practices have been collected, translated, published, and distributed by ethnographers, folklorists, and anthropologists, “much has remained unrecorded and exists in memory” (73). Choctaw tradition depends on oral knowledge held by Choctaw elders—knowledge of language, cultural practices, and migration/emergence narratives—and this oral culture is often “not meant to cross cultural boundaries” through translation or transmittance. New archival practices for Indigenous-held archives must grapple with oral culture and various complicated issues

surrounding its transmission—limitations on access, an imperative of privacy, and the importance of cultural retention for the specific betterment of the Choctaw nation.<sup>50</sup>

This means, then, attending to what is labeled by colonial archival methodologies as “the archive” as incomplete, fragmented, fraught with slippages and tensions, and in relationship with political and social frameworks that govern issues of Native inclusion and omission. It also means considering “the” state/institutional archive as motivated by Imperial and colonial ideologies involving data collection and the ratification of empiricism that have long sought to keep Native and Indigenous communities on the periphery as anthropological specimen. As Tuhiwai Smith notes, “it is surely difficult to discuss *research methodology* and *indigenous peoples* together, in the same breath, without having an analysis of imperialism, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (2). Similarly, Lowe advocates for an acknowledgement of archive as a “material bureaucracy of rule AND the historical trace of imperial activities,” indicating that these same archives can also delineate what the “colonial bureaucracy did not and could not know” (*Intimacies* 4). Institutional archives, as repositories of cultural and historical texts, images, and realia deemed worthy of inclusion in an official collection, must be acknowledged as existing at the intersection of imperial definitions of “research,” “knowledge,” and “institution”—rather than as benign and apolitical historical collections. Additionally, as those who encounter these archives, we must attend to and map collection practices and ethics, issues of access to Indigenous communities and those not in the traditional academy, the ideologies and foundations of holding institutions and their impact on

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<sup>50</sup> For more on the broader issues of repatriation, advocacy for Native American archival presence, and archival sovereignty, see Jennifer R. O’Neal, “‘The Right to Know’: Decolonizing Native American Archives,” *Journal of Western Archives*, vol. 6, no. 1.

archival practices and Indigenous marginalization, and institutional methodologies of inclusion and omission—and consider that *omission* is often more revealing than *inclusion*.

And yet, we are well to remember that colonial archives are also governed by definitions of space and time that affect their collection, arrangement, access, encounter, and interpretation. It is unsurprising that standard Western-European archival practices mirror Western-European epistemologies of time and space: they prioritize linearity, progress, hierarchy, and geographic specificity. They are also spatially contained—in the well-lit and highly-supervised reading rooms of prestigious institutions, the dusty and dank holding halls of libraries and museums, or in the whirring brightness of distant digital netherworlds, accessible (to some) through a series of clicks and passwords.

“The” archive is, then, also relegated to the past—a distant space of what has already been. It is useful, perhaps, in interpreting the present or positing the future, but it most usually generates narratives that only serve to further clarify its connection to an epoch that exists somewhere immaterial, unchanged and unchangeable. The past has already occurred; it is finished, done, static, and invites recovery and revision only under the controlled circumstance of this spatio-temporal framework. This fixed past—and subsequently fixed archival objects—generate narratives, also fixed in time and space, that then generate historiography: the stories we tell ourselves about the past in order to confirm its meaning in the present. Smith reminds us that this view of history is constructed, birthed by Enlightenment thinkers who urged that “History could be recorded systematically and then retrieved through recourse to written texts. It was based on a lineal view of time and was linked closely to notions of progress” (57). According to this persistent Enlightenment thinking, the archive is not a site of transit or radical relationality,

but a static receptacle for empirical truths that serve to reinforce a progress narrative of Western civilization.

In light of this history, LeAnne Howe's intervention in *Miko Kings* raises significant questions about what it means to decolonize records of and encounters with the past. What might it mean to consider archival form and content through a lens of Indigenous/Choctaw theory concerning time, space, and language? What happens to archival possibility when detached from Western-European notions of linearity, progress, and fixity? And most radically, what happens to archival encounter—and its resonances—when the past, present, and future are read as a continuum that are always already still being *imagined, performed, and lived*? Reading Howe's Choctaw "spacetime" alongside scholar Michelle Wright's "epiphenomenal time" suggests the radical possibilities of a decolonized archival "fiction" and its ability to intercede in the past, present and future.

### **On Choctaw Spacetime**

In *Physics of Blackness*, Michelle Wright proposes a revisionist definition of what she terms "epiphenomenal time"—a view of time as divergent from Western-European notions of linearity and progress. For Wright, epiphenomenal time constitutes both this moment, right now, and the past—which is never behind us, but is all around us in changed and continually changing form. Epiphenomenal time, then, encompasses a "now" that is also the past and future—and urges the realization that "we are manifesting the past in the present" (41, 74). Wright notes that this concept "empowers the exploration of spacetime horizontally rather than vertically," which results in an undoing of stratified hierarchies of position and power, or a numbering of events on a timeline based on an artificially constructed hierarchy of significance and chronology (42). As an application, Wright discusses the often homogenized Black identity of the Black Atlantic and

the African Diaspora as instead heterogeneous, and moving beyond the dimensions accessible through Western notions of four-dimensional spacetime: she argues that “the only spatiotemporal moment that can accommodate all these dimensions [of Blackness] is the current moment—not the present, so to speak, but the moment of the *now*, in which the present and the future are conflated and as many past and present moments exist as we can currently discuss, actively linked to Blackness” (60). In other words, Black identity cannot be constructed through a linear Western-European spacetime that relies on cataclysmic historical event for definition. Rather, there are multiplicitous expressions of Black identity—more geographies, personages, perspectives, spatialities—that require a decolonized concept of time in order to fully engage.

Wright’s notion of spatiotemporality that emphasizes the moment of *now* as an infinite spacetime inclusive of both the past and the future is useful when considered alongside Howe’s culturally-specific Choctaw epistemologies concerning the power of language to alter time.

In *Miko Kings*, Lena’s spacetime-negotiating ancestor, Ezol Day, makes claims about spatiality and temporality that unsettle colonial epistemologies and restructure Howe’s novel as it unfolds: Ezol’s stories about Hope, Justina, Indian Territory, and her own life, as well as Lena’s subsequent archival encounters, change the novel, history, and the “archive” itself *as* they are encountered.

For Howe, Choctaw language itself is generative of time and space: Ezol tells Lena that “‘The laws of physics do not distinguish between past and present. Neither does the Choctaw language, at least not in the way that English does. Choctaw verbs have a much broader application, which shades the meaning in ways that English verbs cannot’” (37). As a young woman, Ezol unsuccessfully attempted to publish and patent a theory on time, that primarily asserted how “universal time in space could not exist because there are no universal verb tenses”

and “...time must flow at different rates for English speakers and for tribal peoples” (38). Ezol tells Lena that ““Choctaws didn’t have the same experiences with time as those of Europeans because we speak differently. This is revealed in our vast differences in verb usage. What the Choctaws spoke of, they saw. Experienced”” (37). This explanation of Choctaw time is contextualized by Ezol’s explanation of Native “base and ball” as connected to the sacred—a game that moves counter-clockwise, or against time—and has no time limits. But Ezol’s theory of Choctaw spacetime moves beyond the origins of “American” baseball to structure a broader conception of physics and movement in space, as generated by language.

In conversation with Lena, Ezol uses the example of the Choctaw word “Okchamali”:

‘Consider this. *Okchamali* is the Choctaw word for both blue and green,’ she says. ‘Its roots appear in the Choctaw word *okchanya*, meaning ‘alive.’ Now, where did our people originate? Answer: a world of blue and green swamplands, a watery place. So perhaps *okchamali* relates to a ‘place’ as ‘alive.’”

‘Or ‘lived,’ as in past tense?’ I ask.

She shakes her head passionately. ‘Not past tense, exactly,’ she says. ‘*Okchamali* could be a description of a place name of a primeval epoch when the sky and the sea were so close that there was almost no atmosphere in between. In Choctaw it is the subtle shading, the intensity and grayness, the dullness or brilliance of a thing that determines how it is spoken of. Our language marked the dullness of the sky *in that place* at that particular time.’ (38)



Choctaw language, then, marks spacetime, but not as discrete units of past, present, and future. Rather, it acknowledges, like Wright suggests in her discussion of epiphenomenal time, the interconnectivity of the *now* to the still-existing past and constantly-in-motion future.

*Okchamali*, according to Howe, marks a specific space, time, and quality, as well as the story of Choctaw origin. In this case, language becomes a tool that cannot be divorced from spacetime, that indeed is *engaged* in the active formation of both space and time, like an artist's chisel might shape a blocky chunk of unrefined marble.

At the very end of the novel, after Ezol's oral stories and Lena's archival research, as acts of language, have transformed the *now* and made a radical change in Hope's story (he wins the game against the Seventh Calvary instead of throwing it), Lena calls herself "a moving body in Choctaw space," and notes that "it's my turn to become the movable object in space, a relative whose clock is set at my own distant future" (221). Lena's realization of Choctaw spacetime and its mutability at the hands of language (both the alphabetic texts of written documentation and oral record) recognizes Ezol not as a ghostly apparition "returned" from the past to reveal family secrets, but a body in transit through ever-unfolding Choctaw spacetime. Lena also recognizes her own body as existing not in a discrete time marked by a complete and distant past, but as a "movable object in space" capable of participating in the *now*, which implicates and necessitates both moments before now and the futurities that are currently being written.

Ezol's theorems beg the question: how do conceptions of Choctaw spacetime and language radically change the contours of "the" archive? How might they change our relationship, as those engaged in archival encounter, to "historical" materials and the possibilities of their relationality and futurity? What does a decolonization of time and space through a specifically Choctaw lens

*do* to a reading of archival form, encounter, and interpretation? I argue that Howe's novel—as a work of archival “fiction”—is itself structured as an expression of Choctaw spacetime through archival encounter, and is invested in Indigenizing both archival possibility and the role of narrative in settler-colonial historiography.

### **Archival Eclipse: Private Records and Family Histories**

In *Intimacies of Four Continents*, Lowe describes historical recovery as such:

This is not a project of merely telling history differently, but one of returning to the past, its gaps, uncertainties, impasses, and elisions; it is tracing those moments of eclipse when obscure, unknown, or unperceived elements are lost, those significant moments in which transformations have begun to take place, but have not yet been inserted into historical time (75).

Lowe emphasizes the project of recovery as one of return: an act that pays attention to the tensions of colonial obfuscation and mystification, and the slippages of record-keepers, archivists, and those who purport to interpret documentation as empirical truth. She also emphasizes a search for moments of eclipse—the temporary cloaking of a moving celestial body by another moving object—as revelatory of an historical reality that escapes dominant narrative.

In the opening pages of *Miko Kings*, Howe constructs a visual and textual archive that questions the primacy of documentation, the intervention of oral record, and Western preoccupations with linear chronology. At the same time, Howe's creation of an archival “fiction” centers recovering moments of eclipse—the overshadowing of Indigenous story by settler-colonial narrative—as essential. The Choctaw stories Howe recovers involve the broader

history of baseball and its connection to Ada, Indian Territory, but also the private and intimate histories of Ada's Choctaw inhabitants: stories that remains wholly intransmissible through traditionally accepted forms of archival materiality.

The novel begins with a map of Indian Territory, from 1801, depicting the bordering Choctaw, Creek, Cherokee, and Chickasaw Nations. The label, on the opposite page, reads: "And here too is the echo of baseball's childhood memory in *Anompa Sipokni*, Old Talking Places. Indian Territory" (Figure 2). Howe reframes a map—a colonial device for, as Mishuana Goeman points out, defining masculinist conceptions of territories, boundaries, and divisions—in the lineage of Choctaw cultural history and language.<sup>51</sup> On the third page, an image of a leather journal, open to display its front and back covers, with a flower and the name "Ezol" embossed on the cover, is followed by the label: "A book" (Figure 3). Howe's categorization of private memoir—the account of a Choctaw life—as "a book," elevates the practice of the Indigenous woman diarist to the level of literature, in addition to positing the materiality of physical objects—and their definitional possibilities—as an entry to her narrative.

A map and a book, as colonial technologies for seeing, knowing, assessing, and dispossessing, are re-written here as expressions of Indigenous presence: a map meant to visually limit "Indian" presence is reinscribed as an expression of baseball's birthplace; and a book, so central to Western-European methodologies of meaning-making is reinscribed as a journal written by an Indigenous woman—as both a scathing indictment of boarding schools and an act of self-expression.

The following two-page spread is titled "The film." and displays a black and white film still from *His Last Game*, a twelve-minute silent film released in 1909 by International Moving

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<sup>51</sup> See Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*, University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Pictures, which is appended with both a title and date (Figure 4). The still depicts a Native ball player, wearing a vest and long braids, standing near a base and surrounded by teammates and film crew. *His Last Game* was, according to historical record, the first film about American baseball, and depicts a match-up between Choctaw Indians and the Jimtown Bar (Howe “Imagine There’s No Cowboy” 170). In Howe’s novel, the next two-page spread offers some contextualization of the image: “*The Story.*,” appears on the left-hand side, and “**Prelude**” on the right. What follows as prelude is a brief imaginative textual recreation of the filming of *His Last Game*, in which Howe merges her fictional protagonist with historical narrative, replacing the historical Choctaw ball player William (Bill) Goings with a fictional Hope Little Leader (Howe 171). Howe imagines the filming from the perspective of her fictional characters, critiquing their representation and dress as symbolic of “savagery gone civilized,” noting that “their producer doesn’t know the difference between the plaits of a powerful warrior and those of a little girl” (7). This pairing of imaginative narrative with archival visual “documentation” both positions Howe’s novel as a reimagination and corrective of established history, and dissents with the positionality of archived material as empirical fact. By alluding to the narrative world beyond a material object, Howe also questions the optic as evidentiary, thus suggesting that the regime of visibility is only truly revelatory when accompanied by story.

It is after this “prelude” where the traditional “novel” part of the text begins: there is an explicit shift from a focus on materiality to a focus on the textual. However, the power of materiality— photograph, film, letter, or journal—and its role in generating historical “truth” through narrative remains an active component of the text. Howe moves forward in time to 2006, still in Ada, Oklahoma, and introduces her female protagonist, Lena Coulter, a freelance journalist in the process of renovating the house of her Choctaw grandmother, MourningTree

Bolin. In the walls of the house, a construction worker finds a leather pouch, “stuffed with papers, some in a childish hand, others typed, some penned by an adult” (15). The pouch contains “handwritten pages of symbols and numbers, letters, newspaper clippings, and a 12x12 black and white photograph of an Indian baseball team,” in addition to a “decaying journal with the name ‘Ezol’ embossed on the cover” (15). This private archive, hidden deep within the architectural trappings of familial domestic space, drives the rest of Howe’s narrative: the photograph, which Howe returns to throughout the remainder of the novel, depicts the “1907 Miko Kings Champions,” an image that haunts Lena’s research process as she strives to uncover the origin and history of a baseball team lost to a dominant colonial narrative of baseball as invented by Abner Doubleday.<sup>52</sup> Ezol Day, a returned ancestor and Lena’s grandmother’s cousin, visits Lena during her writing and research process in order to collaborate on the remaking of history through the revelation of oral record, and is revealed as the author of the crumbling journal.

Ezol’s journal, written on the pages of Longfellow’s *Evangeline, a Tale of Acadie*,<sup>53</sup> is reprinted in the middle of the novel, and constitutes a secondary archive: its pages contain personal writings detailing Ezol’s childhood at Good Land Indian Orphanage<sup>54</sup> in the late nineteenth century, and newspaper clippings from early twentieth century Ada (Figure 5). The

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<sup>52</sup> While not analyzed in this chapter, Howe importantly remaps and recovers an Indigenous/Choctaw history of baseball in *Miko Kings* and emphasizes the elements of the game that correspond to Indigenous epistemologies. See LeAnne Howe, “Embodied Tribalography: Mound Building, Ball Games, and Native Endurance in the Southeast,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 75-93.

<sup>53</sup> Longfellow’s epic poem was popular in the nineteenth century. The poem details the romance and tragic separation of the Acadian girl Evangeline and her French lover Gabriel Lajeunesse, as the British remove the Acadians from their land. In an interesting parallel to American Indian removal, the Acadians were historically removed by the British from Acadia (the present-day Canadian provinces of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick) between 1755 and 1764. *Evangeline* is also listed in the 1899-1900 Hampton course Catalogue under “Reading and Literature” as part of the Junior Year Academic Course (27).

<sup>54</sup> Good Land Mission was established in 1850, and later became the Goodland Indian Orphanage and School. Howe adopts the traditional “Indian spelling” in her novel from the mid-nineteenth century. As Sammy D. Hogue indicates in his 1940 history of Goodland, “for many years the Indians invariably called it ‘Good Land,’” a translation of the Choctaw phrase “Yakni Achukma” (13). See *The Goodland Indian Orphanage: A Story of Christian Missions*.

journal is depicted as a product of boarding school literacy: Ezol's first few hand-written entries weave between, alongside, and throughout Longfellow's text, and subsequent entries oscillate between handwritten and typed, and then conclude with a series of uniformly typed entries (Figures 6 and 7). Ezol's "progress" at Good Land can be discerned from her changing vocabulary, move towards the omission of Choctaw phrases, the precision of her handwriting, her use of "literate" technologies like the typewriter, and the extent to which she begins to accept her institutionalization as part of her fate. Language and literacy, in other words, define her assimilation.

Howe's interrogation of colonial record-keeping practices is centered in the reliability of documents themselves—inclusive of the recreated images of documents embedded in the novel—as dubious representations of empirical fact. Ezol as ancestral voice in her encounters with Lena explains that ““Documents lie,”” and ““No one will ever know who they really are if they rely on paper identities issued by the federal government. Documents cannot be trusted”” (28, 29). Lena, a journalist by trade, is deeply ingrained in colonial research practices: in order to uncover more of Ada's history and probe Ezol's oral recollections, she turns to the immediacy and authority of official “documentation.” A multitude of newspaper clippings, letters from the U.S. Patent Office rejecting Ezol's essays on concepts of Choctaw time, the records of the Oklahoma Historical Society, the official student files at Hampton Institute, and Angie Debo's book of Choctaw history, *And Still the Waters Run*, are all centralized in Lena's research methodology as purveyors of truth that can either confirm or deny Ezol's orally transmitted histories (Figure 8).<sup>55</sup> Colonial documentation methodologies and historiographical practices run

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<sup>55</sup> In the author's note at the end of *Miko Kings*, Howe lists the works central in her own research process. Although I suspect this list does not limn out Howe's total archival engagement, it does include Angie Debo's *And Still the Waters Run*, in addition to Roy S. McKeown's history of Ada, *Reflections of Goodland*, vols. 1 and 2, and the newspaper archives of the *Ada Evening News*.

parallel to oral narrative and private memory, and Howe suggests the value of both in recovering Indigenous presence.

This multi-sensorial archive and interrogation of research process is paralleled by Howe's remapping of spacetime: in the novel's chapters, Howe moves back and forth between Lena's 21<sup>st</sup> century research and Ezol's embedded recollections and explanations of the past, and baseball player Hope Little Leader's repositories of private memory. Hope is in a nursing home in Ada in 1969, and fades in and out of consciousness, privately rehearsing his experiences at "Hampton Normal School for Blacks and Indians," his love affair with Hampton teacher turned Black Nationalist revolutionary Justina Maurepas, his baseball victories and the ultimate tragic deformation of his hands at the end of his experience playing for the Miko Kings. The primacy of memory as historical archive—whether shared or transmitted in order to establish "truth" and identity, as in the case of Ezol, or mentally rehearsed for private cathartic ends, as in the case of Hope—raises questions about the dichotomy of public vs. private and the possibilities of transmission in Nation-specific oral archives that operate outside of institutional or cultural centers. Ezol's memories are shared with Lena in the name of creating a written and shareable document that could accompany institutional archival collections as purveyor of tribally and family-specific history. Hope's memories are psychologically embedded, and although the reader of Howe's novel is privy to their contents, Lena is not. Hope's most important memories—his experiences at Hampton, his love affair with Justina, his physical ruin—and the way they contribute to a larger tribal history, remain untransmittable—even though they still hold the power to alter space and time. In other words, there are deeply revelatory records that the colonial archive can never know.

As Penelope Papailias argues in her work on archival poetics in Greece, a private archive can serve as an important counter—or supplement—to the work of institution and state in its ability to interrogate “the authority of public stories by the whispers of family secrets, the archive as monument to national accumulation by the centrifugal forces of transnational labor and colonial expropriation, the rhetoric of fact by the truth of fiction, and the transparency of referential statement by the impact of performative utterances” (1). In this way, personal archives become counter archives: sites that question both the totalizing, monolithic narrative of history and “fact” projected by institutionally-located and state collections, and suggest the archival process itself (surveying, arranging, describing, preservation) as an opportunity for resistance. Even more strikingly in the case of Howe’s novel, Ezol’s stories, Lena’s accompanying research, and Hope’s memories all collaborate to not only challenge the monolithism of “American history,” but also change space and time. Through the language of story, Ezol and Lena both reclaim their lineage of ancestry and identity, Lena asserts her radical relationality to Ada’s Choctaw history and the way it will shape both the now and future, and Hope catches the final ball in the game versus the Seventh Calvary that he had originally purposefully dropped—an explicit change of the past only possible through a remediation of private “archive.”

### **Archival Aporia: Choctaw Presence and Hampton Histories**

It is also in Hope’s memories that Howe most significantly challenges the veracity of historical and archival record, and confronts archival aporia, particularly in connection to the Hampton Normal School for Blacks and Indians. After the death of his mother in 1896, Hope is effectively kidnapped and taken to Hampton by a preacher and his wife, along with his two siblings, eight-year old Lucinda and a baby, Helema. After they arrive, Hope and his sisters are



almost sent away with the following explanation: “the school didn’t want Indians from the Five Civilized Tribes because they’d once held slaves, and because the Choctaws had their own schools in Indian Territory” (65). Hope stays at Hampton for three years, tries to run away multiple times and is subsequently imprisoned in a “solitary cell underground” (61). After rejoining the Institute’s academic program, he falls in love with a part Black, part “Louisiana Indian” teacher’s aide, whom he calls “Dusky Long-Gone Girl,” and who later comes to live with him in Ada (51). Hope’s love affair with Justina ends sadly, at least in terms of conventional narrative. However, their union reverberates beyond the confines of plot structure: both Hope and Justina are continually generating, feeling, and sensing the other’s presence—not as a ghostly whisper from a distant past, but as a tremor of possibility: what could still be in a shifting spacetime that is never completely resolute.

Howe’s positioning of Hope, a Choctaw student, at Hampton counters archival institutional documentation: the 1896 course catalogue lists Indian students separately from Black students, and notes their tribal affiliation.<sup>56</sup> Of 117 Indian students enrolled that year, there are no Choctaw listed (nor Creek, Chickasaw, or Seminole)—but thirty Cherokee students’ names are recorded, countering Howe’s assertion that the Five Civilized Tribes were excluded from Hampton. According to a broader study done by John L. Brudvig of official student records from 1878-1923 (the years covering the Hampton Indian Program), there were no Choctaw students enrolled (nor Chickasaw, Creek, or Seminole), but a total of 62 (mostly Eastern Band) Cherokee.<sup>57</sup> Hampton’s practices for recruiting American Indian students is

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<sup>56</sup> This separation of “Negro” and “Indian” students in written record is an institutionalized practice in Hampton’s archives: course catalogues, reports from graduated students, and lists of current students are all organized according to this segregated methodology.

<sup>57</sup> According to Brudvig’s study and my own calculations of the 43 years covering the Indian program, American Indian students were officially recorded with the following tribal affiliations: Absentee-Shawnee (30), Aleut (or Beaver) (1), Apache (21), Arapaho (10), Arikara (20), Assiniboin (2), Caddo (5), Cayuga (12), Cherokee (62), Cheyenne (18), Chippewa (Ojibwa) (51), Clallam (3), Comanche (2), Cree (1), Crow (6), Delaware (2), Gros Ventre

likewise well-documented: the school was primarily interested in “sourcing” students from Western tribes, or so called “reservation Indians,” as Armstrong called them, particularly the Sioux, Omaha, and Winnebago. Armstrong considered these tribes to be “untouched”: the “rudest savages” from the “simple, wild, Indian life; pure blood” (qtd. in Lindsey 198). After 1880, however, Hampton began to “source” its Indian students from, in the words of then-principal H.B. Frissell, “the more civilized tribes nearer home” (qtd. in Lindsey 202).<sup>58</sup> This shift “accelerated a trend already well underway by the mid-1880s: the Indian student body was becoming one of predominately mixed ancestry” (Lindsey 204).

It is here where Hampton’s official archival data—and delineations of tribal affiliation—become complicated. As Lindsey has found, students “as much as seven-eighths Caucasian but culturally Indian could attend Hampton at government expense without special permission,” which resulted in a category of students labeled “White Indians” (204). Additionally, Hampton educated at least twenty-five “black Indians” throughout the Indian program’s tenure (204-205).<sup>59</sup> This number includes three Seminole freedmen, and at least nine children of Creek freedwomen (William Lone Wolf, orphaned and later adopted by the Kiowa, and Eva, Lafayette, Julia, Emaline, Lydia, Rebecca, Myrtle, and David Shawnee, who were captured and adopted by

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(Hidasta) (7), Hopi (1), Kiowa (9), Klamath (1), Little Lake (Liomkai Pomo) (1), Mandan (7), Mashpee (1), Menominee (6), Miami (1), Micmac (1), Mission (2), Mohave (5), Mohwak (4), Munsee (1), Navajo (12), Omaha (75), Oneida (194), Onondaga (29), Otow (4), Ottawa (1), Paiute (1), Papago (6), Pawnee (27), Penobscot (2), Peoria (1), Piegan (1), Pima (17), Ponca (4), Potawatomi (10), Pueblo (8), Sac & Fox (18), Seneca (112), Shasta (1), Shinnecock (7), Shoshone (1), Cheyenne River Agency (62), Crow Creek Agency (94), Flandreau Agency (2), Lower Brule Agency (66), Pine Ridge Agency (27), Rosebud Agency (3), Santee Agency (38), Sisseton Agency (11), Standing Rock Agency (125), Yankton Agency (66), Other Sioux (7), Snohomish (1), Stockbridge (19), Swinomish (1), Tlingit (1), Tuscarora (21), Ute (1), Wailaki (1), Wichita (6), Winnebago (64), Wyandot (1), Yaqui (1), Yuki (1), Yuma (6).

<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, this change in philosophy under Frissell’s leadership may have something to do with family affiliation: One of Frissell’s sisters, Judith, was a missionary to the Choctaw, and was buried “among them.” See “Death notice of Rev. Amasa C. Frissell,” in the *Southern Workman*, Vol. XXII No. 4, May 1894.

<sup>59</sup> Terminology delineating students with part-Black and part-Indian ancestry in official Hampton publications is both rare and varied. In *Twenty-Two Years’ Work*, for example, Peter Black-Hawk and his brother Frank Black-Hawk are recorded as “half Sioux and half Negro” (467, 382).

the Shawnee tribe, and arrived at Hampton between 1900-1912) (206-208). These moments of historical dissent from Hampton's binary "Negro" and "Indian" model should call institutional classification and taxonomic decisions regarding Indian identity into question. In an era obsessed with a lexicon of race and the materiality of identity documentation, and considering Hampton's ideological commitment to Armstrong's scale of civilization and segregated education, historians should be skeptical of the official archive's easy categorizations and politically motivated tribal distinctions.<sup>60</sup>

Of course, these moments of archival aporia—when colonial models of organization and classification are unable to encompass the multiplicities of lived experience—lay bare the classificatory and pragmatic impulse of both the regime of visibility and the imperative of documentation at work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lowe suggests that interventions in colonial archives can conjure what the "colonial bureaucracy did not and could not know," making visible both the violence of omission and the limitations of colonial epistemologies (4). How does Howe's historical intervention in placing a Choctaw student at Hampton make visible this aporia? What is at stake in the suggestion that this presence is a "historical" possibility? In an interview at Hampton University with La Rose Davis, Howe addresses her approach to historical "truth" in *Miko Kings* directly: "I am recovering Choctaw history that didn't exist until I wrote these things and told this story. It didn't exist. So, in effect, I have changed time and space. And that's the act of a writer, the act of a storyteller, the act of a scholar" ("Black and Red Convergences" 87). Howe posits the archival "fiction" of the novel as a tribalogy, shaped both by orality and an interrogation of materiality: an active player in

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<sup>60</sup> Frank Black-Hawk is described in *Twenty Two Years' Work* as "inheriting the infirmities of both races," which supposedly causes his alcoholism and eventual sentence to a penitentiary after leaving Hampton (382). His multi-racial identity, in other words, was situated as the reason for his downfall—rather than his possibly inadequate training at Hampton.

world-making. No official records of possible Choctaw presence exist at Hampton Institute, but now, through Howe's intervention—and through the inclusion of *Miko Kings* in the present-day Hampton University library—they do.

This recovery of a disrupting historical/lived possibility evokes what Christina Sharpe terms, in reference to life after Black slavery, “wake work”: “a mode of inhabiting and rupturing this episteme with our [Black] known lived and un/imaginable lives” (18). In the wake of Indigenous dispossession and erasure, Howe imagines what lies at the intersection of novel and archive: the potential for a rupturing language to alter spacetime, interrogate the limitations of Eurocentric materiality, and posit a possibility of presence that changes institutional record—and challenges its preeminence as legislator of racial and cultural identity.

### **Archival Erasure: Black/Native Histories in Indian Territory**

Hope's relationship with Justina, a woman of “Louisiana Indian,” French, and African/Haitian ancestry—called a “black Indian girl” by Hope himself—is also declared an impossibility by Hampton institutional record. An examination of Virginia and Hampton history reveals why: late nineteenth century anxiety concerning “miscegenation” was widespread. One of the primary arguments against interracial education was the idea that sexual attraction across “color” lines might occur. The state of Virginia, home to Hampton, embraced the most severe miscegenation law in the nation, and increased the punishment for interracial sex and relationship from two years in prison to five in 1877.<sup>61</sup> Official Hampton Institute publications

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<sup>61</sup> An 1866 act in Virginia labeled race the following way: “every person having one-fourth or more of negro blood, shall be deemed a colored person, and every person, not a colored person, having one-fourth or more of Indian blood, shall be deemed an Indian.” In 1910, the law was renegotiated; while it left the definition of “Indian”

sought to assuage societal anxieties (and the fears of White donors wary of participating in a project tinged with “immorality”) with euphemistic rhetoric guaranteeing the impossibility of interracial romance. In a 1908 issue of the *Southern Workman*, F. G. Speck wrote that “intermixture” was occurring amongst the “mixed blood Creeks, Choctaws, Seminoles, Cherokees and Chickasaws of the new Oklahoma”—an indication that Hampton was aware of these supposedly dangerous practices and perhaps hesitant to include these tribes amongst their student body (Vol. XXXVII, No. 2, 110). Inevitably, Speck’s article stokes early twentieth century fears of Black/Indian miscegenation and the difficulty this “intermixture” would pose to legal precedent, but it also implicitly underscores dominant ideologies of racial purity. Samuel Armstrong, Hampton’s founder, spent considerable time attempting to calm apprehensions that these models of race mixing extended to Hampton: he wrote in 1888, “but in ten years, not a serious fracas has occurred, not a single case of immorality, between the students of both races and of both sexes” (*Ten Years’ Work* 4). Armstrong continues by describing racial purity and segregation as a byproduct of his educational model: “And we believe that education of the mind and heart tends to individual morality and race purity” (14). Armstrong’s commentary here could easily be interpreted as a naiveté rooted in White supremacist thinking, but is more likely pointed propaganda: White charitable donors needed to be assured that their valuable monetary funds were “solving” racial issues, and not creating them.

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unchanged, it changed the definition of “colored person” to “Every person having one-sixteenth or more of negro blood.” See Act of Feb. 27, 1866, ch. 17, and 1866 Va. Act 84, and Act of Mar. 17, 1910, ch. 357.

According to less-public archival record, however, like faculty meeting minutes and intra-departmental letters, interracial romance—of course—did occur. As faculty meeting notes from 1879 anxiously record, “Indian boys are looking favorably upon colored girls at school” (qtd. in Lindsey 169). Records also indicate that in the case of a male Indian student interested in a Black female student, the offending male was usually sent away in a further attempt at eliminating interracial romance—as in the case of Cheyenne student James Paypay and his efforts to “establish improper intimacy” with a Black female student (169). This discrepancy between private archive and public propaganda underscores Hampton’s obsession with controlling official record—particularly in regards to Black/Indian intersectional experience—and suggests the necessity of recovering lived experience in the tangled polyphony of “the” institutional archive.

Of course, much was at stake in Hampton’s maintenance of the façade of interracial untenability: funding for American Indian students from the US government and continued support from White charitable donors was dependent on the institute’s ability to maintain distinct racial lines. Notably, however, the Choctaw Nation also maintained their own staunch policies regarding Black/Indian interracial marriage: in 1888, the Choctaw General Council decided that “if a Choctaw man or Choctaw woman should marry a negro man or negro woman he or she shall be deemed guilty of a felony” (Acts and Resolutions of the Choctaw Council).<sup>62</sup> After Oklahoma gained statehood in 1907, similar “racial purity” laws governed all of former Indian Territory: the state constitution defined the terms “colored” and “negro” as inclusive of all those of “African descent,” and the phrase “white race” to include “all other persons.” Uniquely, “Indians” were incorporated into the category of “white.” State law also indicated that “any

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person of African descent” was prohibited from marrying “any person not of African descent.” This law was not repealed until the 1960s (Oklahoma Constitution, art 23, sec. 11).

The Choctaw Nation’s laws governing racial purity have complex origins: they begin with the institution and regulation of chattel slavery in eighteenth century Choctaw law, and move to a subsequent debate concerning the exclusion of freedmen from the tribe after Emancipation. In 1836, for example, the Choctaw General Council enacted a law against the expression of “the most fatal and destructive doctrine of abolitionism” by citizens of the United States in the Choctaw Nation. In 1853, the General Council reaffirmed an earlier law stating that no slave or child of slaves was to be taught in any school. After Emancipation, the General Council denied the inclusion of freedmen into the Nation until an 1866 treaty with the United States, and only granted freedmen citizenship in 1883. More recently, the Choctaw constitution of 1983 disenfranchised these same citizens by only allowing citizenship to those who can track their ancestry to the Dawes rolls.<sup>63</sup>

This complex legal history of legislating Black/hybrid identity in the Choctaw Nation, broader Indian Territory, and eventually Oklahoma, makes Howe’s historical intervention—Hope and Justina’s relationship—all the more significant. Their love affair is not just institutionally denied and unrecorded, but legally and historically forbidden in the name of both a Nationally and tribally-located imperative of racial “purity.” Through Justina Maurepaus’ presence in Indian Territory, Howe makes visible anti-Black racism and implicates the complex history of slaveholding and lived intersectional racial identity in the Choctaw Nation. Howe represents Hope’s relationship with Justina as sensuous and intimate: Hope remembers her as

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<sup>63</sup> See Clara Sue Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2007 and Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South*. University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

“His teacher. Lover. The woman he’s come to rely on,” and says “She is pleasure clasped to memory like a fastball to glove. Like a man fastened to woman’s breast” (190, 191). Hope rehearses a poignant love scene, in which he is very aware of their disparate racial identities: “Her red-black straddling his red. Her face next to his. Their copper sweat and slick washing into open, hungry mouths” (190). Hope’s union with Justina results in a child—a child who will carry Choctaw, Louisiana Indian, African, Haitian, and French heritage, establishing—unbeknownst to Hope—a lineage and futurity for his love affair with Justina.<sup>64</sup>

But Howe’s characterization of Justina is complicated—she leaves Indian Territory because her body is read as “Black” rather than Choctaw, as amplified by her subsequent experiences with anti-Black racial violence, and as a result, she re-embraces Black Nationalism—an action that actively rejects her Indian identity and creates an alter-ego, “Black Juice.” As Ezol recounts in her diary, “The Klan members carried a burning cross and shouted ‘Coloreds s’posed to be living in Colored Town,’” an incident that causes a pregnant Justina to flee the Territory (171). Howe frames Justina’s resultant political ideology as intersecting (literally and figuratively) with seminal heroes of the Civil Rights movement like King and controversial figures like Marcus Garvey and DuBois (74, 77). When an elderly Justina recounts her early life to Morehouse professor Algernon Pinchot, a clear representative of the academy and colonially-embedded research process, she implicates her biracial identity as part of her politics: “‘There were terrible costs in those days to being Negro or Indian. Or both’” (75).

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<sup>64</sup> Although Howe does not specify a tribal affiliation for Justina, the phrase she does use, “Louisiana Indian,” may refer to the Houma, a tribe historically connected to the Choctaw. In an interview with Kirstin Squint, Howe notes that “Louisiana is part of our ancient homelands. Hundreds of place names in the state are Choctaw.” See “Choctawan Aesthetics, Spirituality, and Gender Relations: An Interview with LeAnne Howe,” *MELUS*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 211-224.



Justina's identity as the revolutionary "Black Juice," a woman charged with blowing up a red-light district and educating the children of prostitutes, is shaped by newspaper archives and official records, which Pinchot recounts to Justina as he attempts to join oral record with official documentation. Notably, Howe inserts the imagined Justina into a documented historical narrative of Black history and resistance: she is the true perpetrator of a bombing in the Storyville red-light district on July 25, 1900 (76)<sup>65</sup>, a friend of jazz musician Buddy Bolden (76), the subject of DuBois' writings in *The Crisis* (77), a lover of William Shakespeare, the "'Negro Chief of Police' of the United Negro Improvement Association," (70), and a muse of musician Eubie Blake (72).<sup>66</sup> In this sense, "Black Juice" is a persona documented by paper trails and newsprint, firmly implanted in the canon of history and the archive of civil rights, but Justina—as a woman full of multiplicities and marked by racial hybridity—is notably absent from all record. Justina's descendants, as described by Pinchot in a letter to Lena, identify as "African American" even though Justina's identity is far more complex (203). This eventual acceptance of state-sanctioned racial categorization—and this creation of a racially static alter-ego in "Black Juice"—demonstrates the psychic stability found in racial "purity" and cultural intelligibility and makes visible a long national—and tribal—history of denying Black/Indian identity.<sup>67</sup> Algernon Pinchot's eventual marriage to Hope and Justina's granddaughter, Evangeline, extends the

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<sup>65</sup> Howe likely has created a fictional response to the Robert Charles riots, which occurred near the Storyville red-light district from July 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> 1900. After Charles, an African American civil rights supporter, allegedly shot a white police officer and avoided arrest, white mobs brutally attacked black citizens. See William Ivy Hair, *Carnival of Fury: Robert Charles and the New Orleans Race Riot of 1900*. Louisiana State UP, 1976.

<sup>66</sup>Buddy Boulden (1877-1931) was a cornetist and one of the founders of New Orleans jazz; W.E.B. DuBois founded and contributed frequently to *The Crisis*, the official publication of the NAACP from 1910-1923; the United Negro Improvement Association was a Garvey project, and Shakespeare was arrested along with Fred Dyer for the alleged killing of Rev. J. W. H. Eason, who was set to testify against Garvey concerning his mail fraud accusations; Eubie Blake (1887-1983) was a composer and musician, and co-wrote one of the first Broadway plays to be written and directed by African Americans. See "Report by Special Agent Mortimer J. Davis," January 1923.

historical legacy of Black/Native intersection, establishes a clear futurity, and further defies both a state-governed and tribally-inscribed genealogy of denial.

Howe's projection of an imagined character of Black and Indian heritage into "documented" history outlines new opportunities for thinking about archival erasure. Stoler suggests that a "thinking about a 'history that has never been present'" is not "a project of direct retrieval so much as an opportunity to reengage with what might otherwise be cast (aside) as unassimilated debris—scenes and things unyielding to storied form" (52). Or, in the case of Howe, to take up the form of story as the only framework capacious enough to interrogate archival (and thus identificatory) stasis. In the absence of sufficient "archival documentation," to imagine Choctaw and Black interaction—however precarious—is to imagine what exists at the interstices of what is known and what cannot be known: the very lived experiences that have been precluded by law, forbidden by institutional decree, and made dangerous by colonial hierarchies of racial integrity, purity, and segregation. The story, then, becomes a suggestion of what the archive *could* contain—a gesture towards archival possibility—should oral record and lived experience interrupt the hierarchies of colonial knowledge, record-keeping, and classification.

#### Towards Decolonial Archival Futures

At the end of *Miko Kings*, Hope Little Leader changes time through story manifested as memory—he relives his final game as a ball player, and reimagines a ball that he purposefully dropped (to earn a monetary bribe that he planned to use to start a new life with Justina) as a purposeful catch. Hope's personal triumph over the indelibility of "history" in 1969 echoes Lena's in 2006: after discovering that Ezol is her ancestor, she realizes that they are thusly

“intimately linked by the motion of story,” and yet also “distinct equations” in time and space (221). Although Lena acknowledges that they must both eventually disappear bodily, at least “for a time,” she gestures towards “the mission of celestial knowledge” and the possibilities of “the sacred made manifest in the flesh of the page” (221). Implicated in this multiplicitous term—“page”—is the linguistic record of the written word through material document, but also oral story as transmitted through time and space by a messenger, and the knowledge/record of time inscribed on the body itself as active participant in historical event. This language acknowledges various emissaries of multi-sensorial world-making: storyteller, author, ancestor, the body as bearer of history—and the role of time and place, and thus encounter, in revealing meaning.

This final “moment” of *Miko Kings* implicitly evokes the power of archives over subsequent narratives, in the form of cultural memory, historical scholarship, identity formation, and national imaginaries. Howe’s project, through Choctaw epistemologies of time and space, situates narrations of archival encounter—the haptics of engagement with story/text/the “page”—as capable of reshaping imaginaries, and suggests the observer/participant/writer/creator/storyteller as active *maker* of a multi-temporal history that is already part of the present and the future. Through a reimagination of the novel form, this decolonial archival work is more than a project of recovery—rather, it redefines the contours of recovery itself and its allegiance to linear time and carefully regulated settler geographies. It asks: what can “recovery” look like when read through the lens of culturally-specific Indigenous epistemology? And how does this change the futures of historical interpretation for us all?

In “A Glossary of Haunting,” Eve Tuck and C. Ree write: “I want to slip a note into some people’s pockets, ‘Decolonization is not metaphor,’ because at some point, we’re going to have

to talk about returning stolen land. My guess is that people are going to be really reluctant to give up that ghost” (647). It seems White scholars and politicians, in particular, have difficulty resisting the seductive expansiveness of decolonial metaphor—its whispered promises of Indigenous sovereignty often remain firmly rooted in the intellectual, the imaginary, and the symbolic, rather than trespassing into the messy and complicated terrain of materiality. In other words, the materiality of decolonization requires the settler-colonial state to give something up—to practice what it means to cede, to return, and to abandon a long-celebrated spatial control. Tuck’s reminder here is sobering: it urges those of us who deal in the immaterial—the commerce of ideas—to remember the weighty *materiality* of decolonization and its effects on Indigenous archives, bodies, and land.

LeAnne Howe’s connection of Choctaw story in *Miko Kings* to the materiality of newspaper articles, film, journals, photographs, allotment records, house deeds, and other documentation that have been used to legislate Native identities mediates between the immaterial and material in ways that suggest new decolonial possibilities for both archival encounter and archival “fiction.” It gestures towards what is at stake when these connections are made both visible and tactile: A reclamation of Indigenous histories/presents/futures that speak back to narratives of erasure and dispossession, disenfranchisement and mythologizing; that make a material way forward towards creative, intellectual, environmental, political, and land sovereignty. At the same time, Howe gives weight to what settler-colonial epistemologies of record-keeping have deemed immateriality/immaterial—story, oral record, and lived experience that defy institutional decree and legal precedent, and make way for a revelation of relationality.

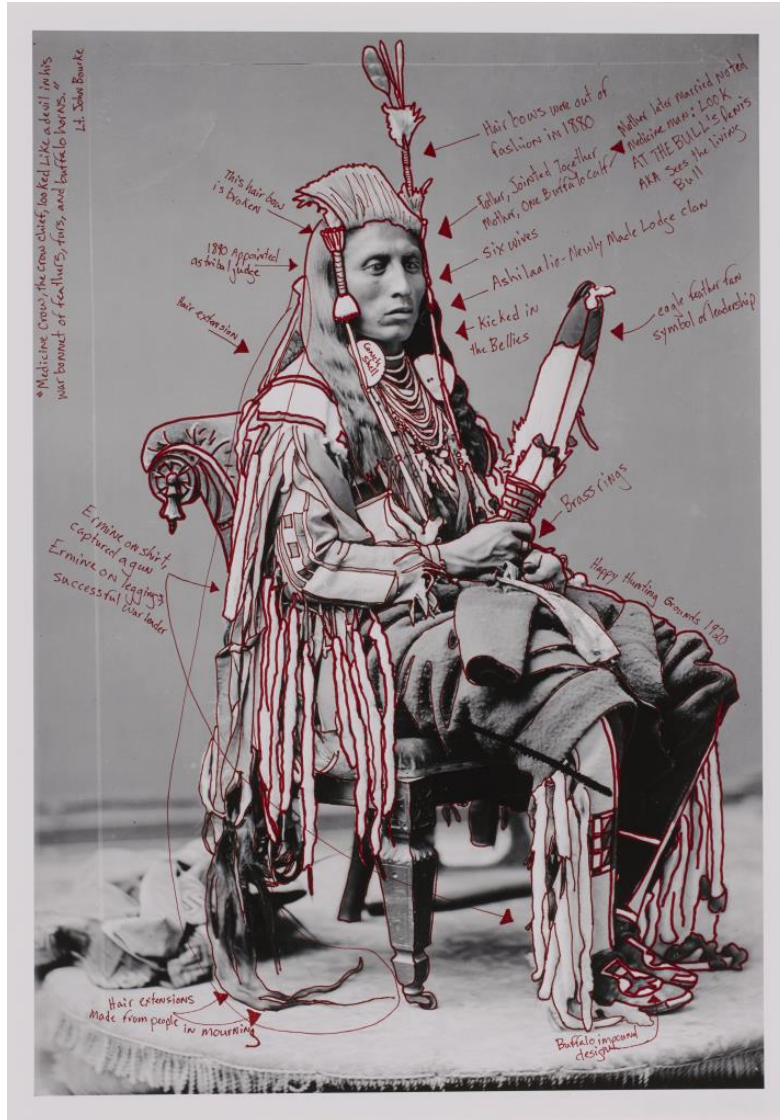
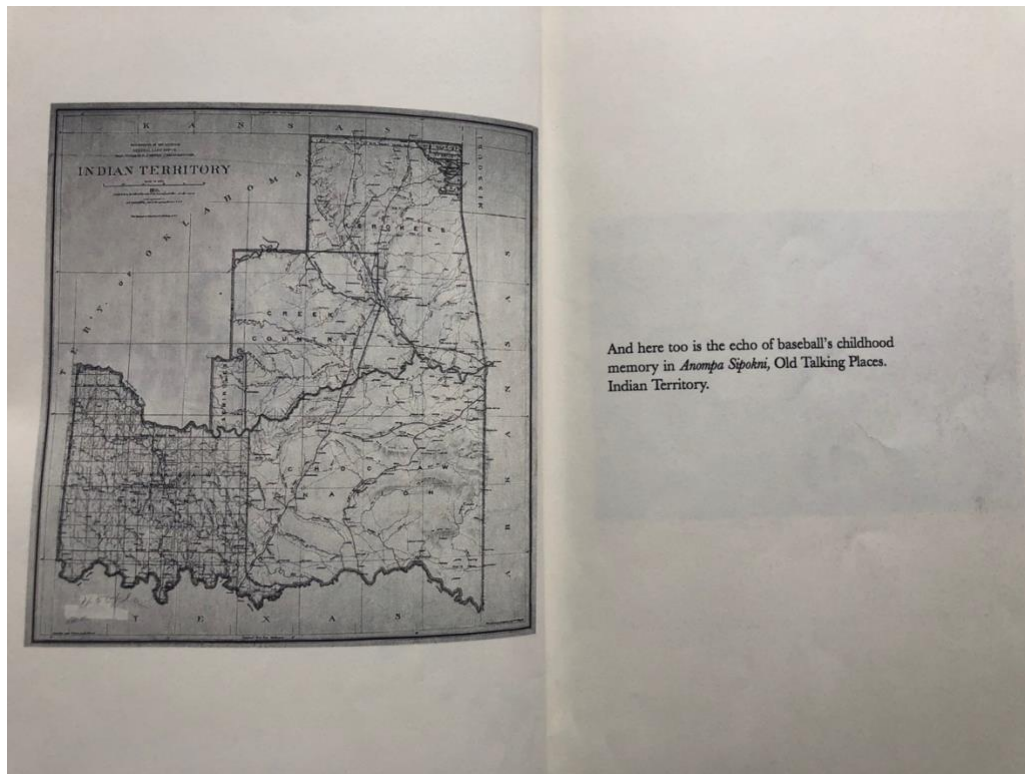


Figure 18 Wendy RedStar. *Peelatchiwaaxpáash/Medicine Crow*. 2014. Red ink on laser-jet printing.



And here too is the echo of baseball's childhood  
memory in *Anompa Sipokni*, Old Talking Places.  
Indian Territory.

Figure 19 Leanne Howe. *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, 2007, pp. 1-2.

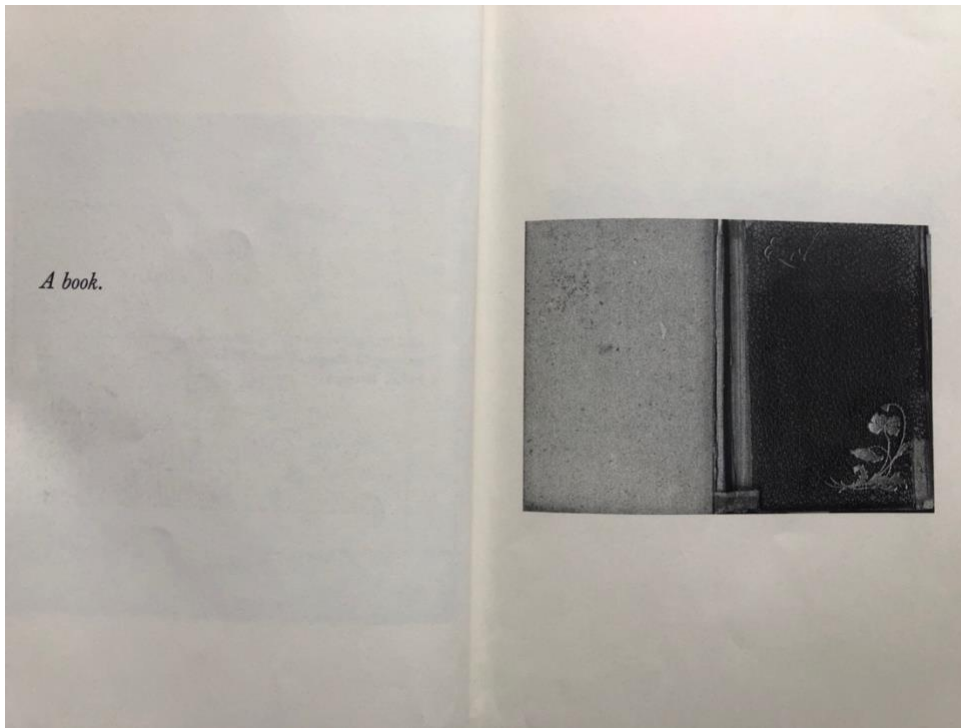


Figure 20 Leanne Howe. *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, 2007, pp. 3-4.

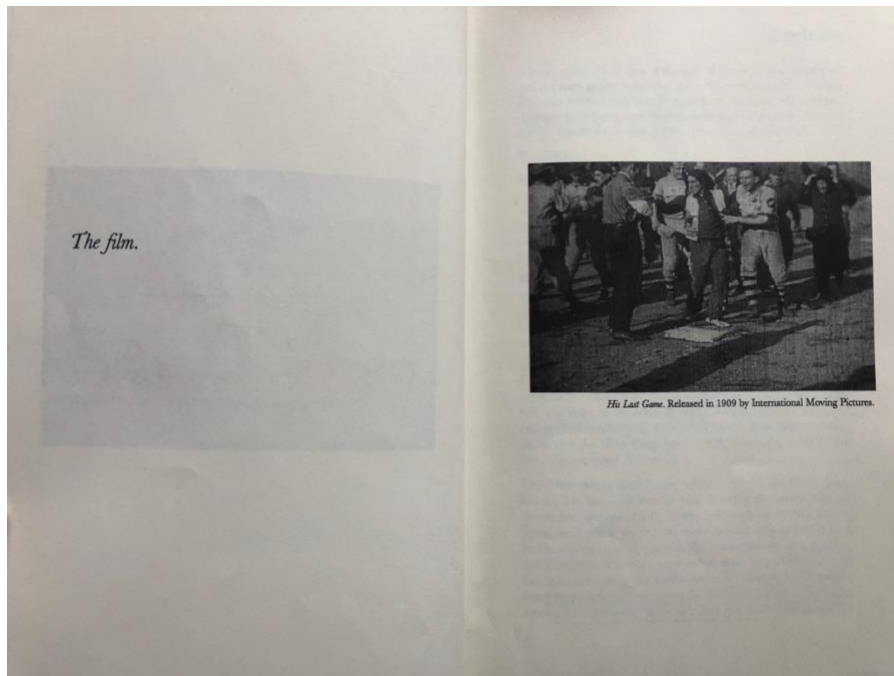


Figure 21 Leanne Howe. *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, 2007, pp. 5-6.



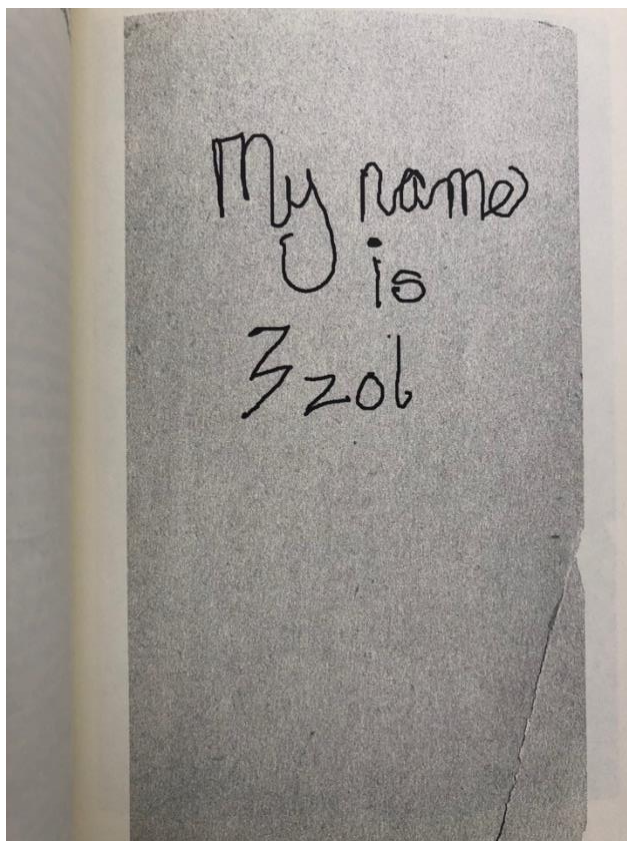


Figure 22 LeAnne Howe. *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, 2007, pp. 129.

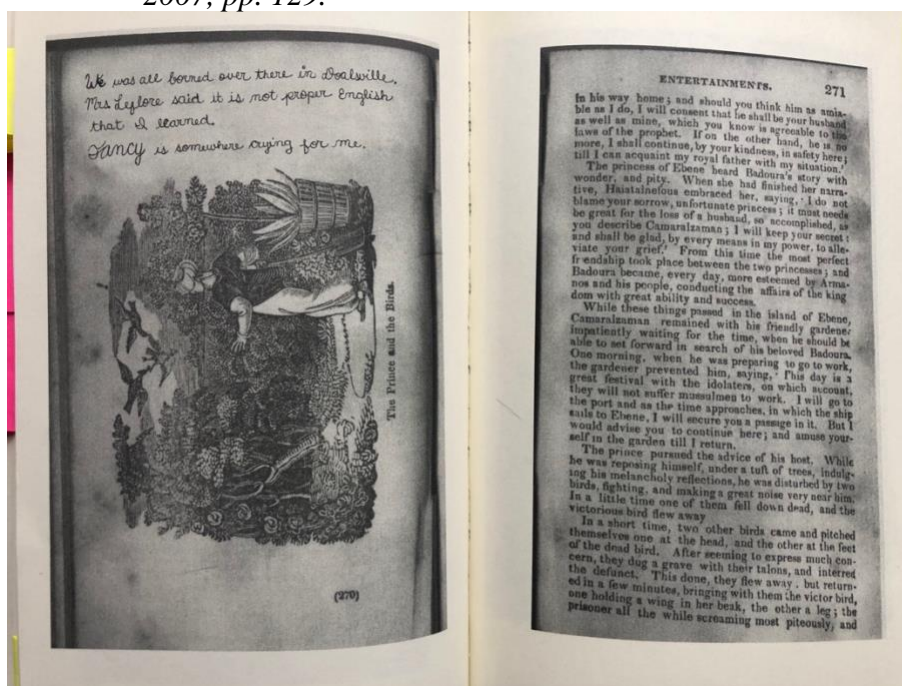


Figure 23 LeAnne Howe. *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, 2007, pp. 130-131.

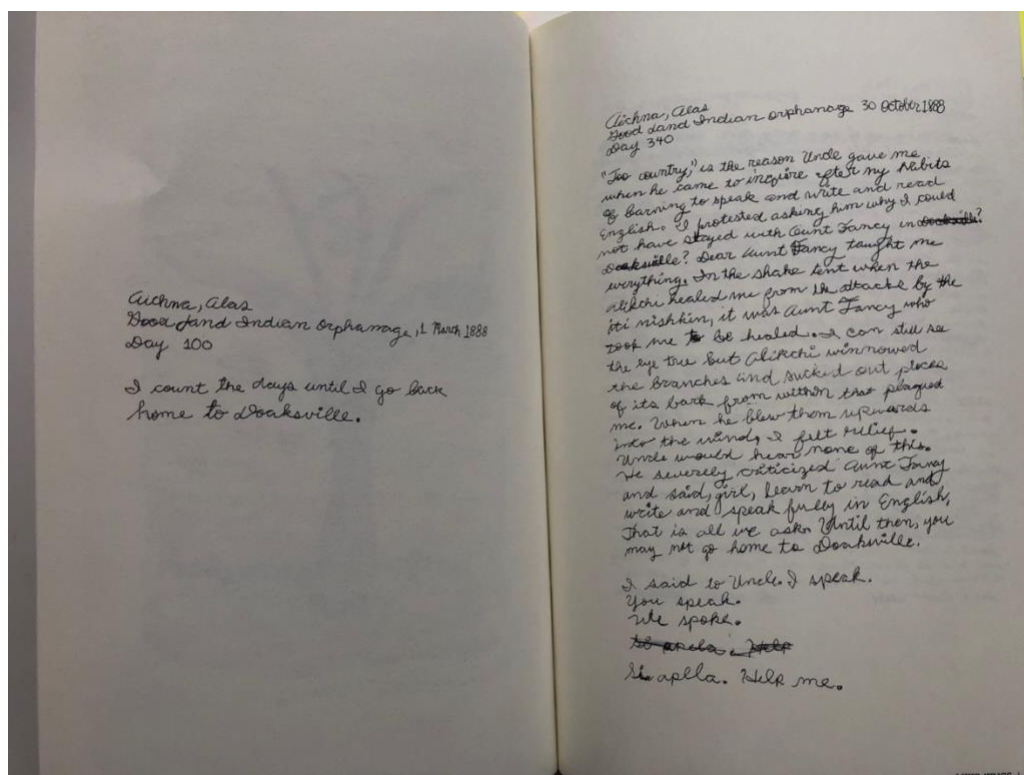


Figure 24 LeAnne Howe. *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, 2007, pp. 136-137.

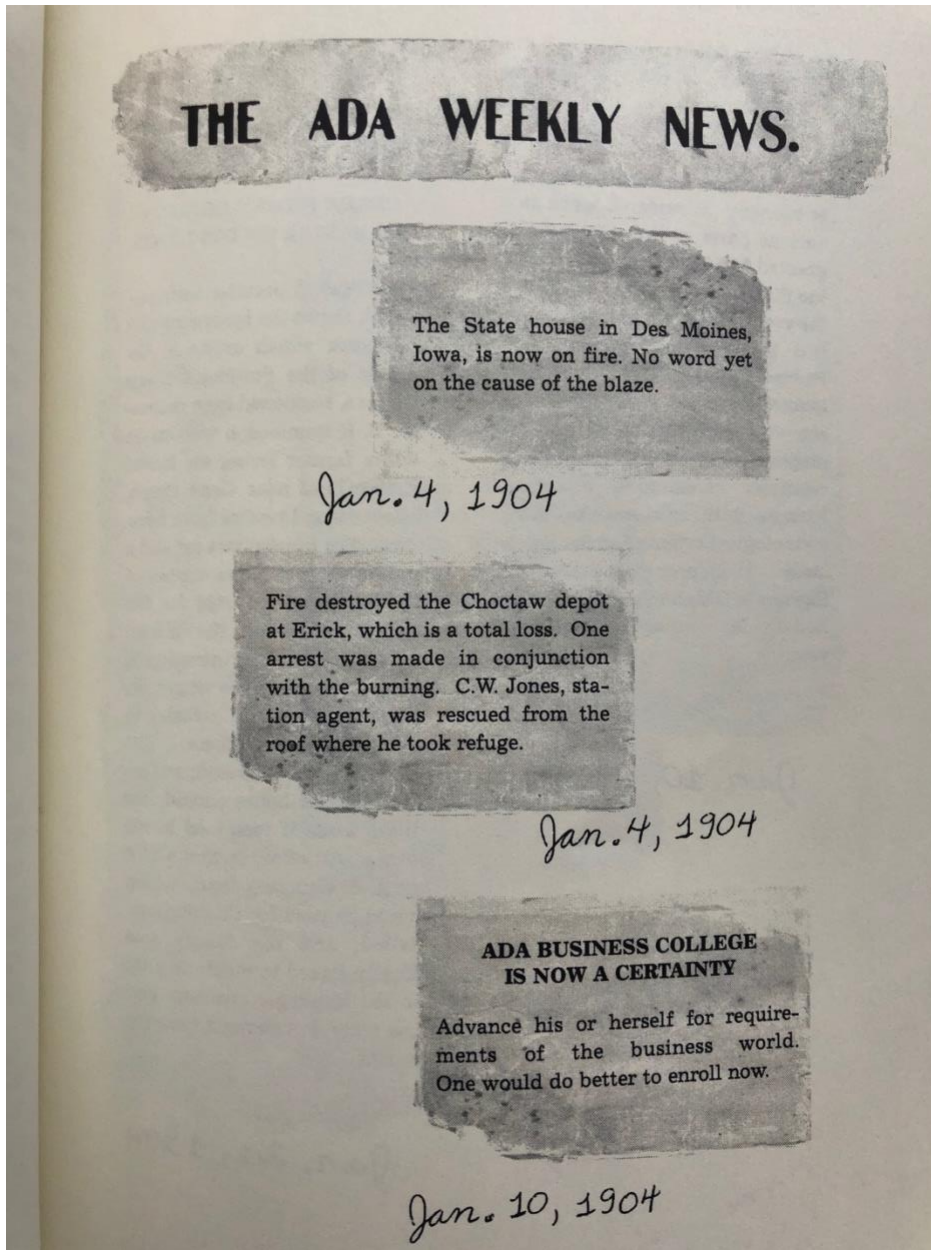


Figure 25 LeAnne Howe. *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, 2007, pp. 149.

## 5 INTERSECTIONAL RESPATIALIZATION IN JULIE DASH'S *DAUGHTERS OF THE DUST*

It is impossible to portray the St. Helena Negro apart from his regional setting. He lives in an isolated low country which, however prominent historically, has in more recent times been well-nigh forgotten. —Clyde Vernon Kiser

Geography is not, however, secure and unwavering; we produce space, we produce its meanings, and we work very hard to make geography what it is. —Katherine McKittrick

### **Insurgent Imaginaries: Revisionary Looking and the “Sea Islands”**

In the late 1980s, Carrie Mae Weems made multiple trips to the coast of South Carolina to visit what's colloquially referred to as “The Sea Islands”—a chain of barrier and tidal islands stretching from North Carolina to Florida along the Atlantic. Motivated primarily by an interest in the history of Gullah Geechee communities and influenced by her early training in folklore, Weems described her photographic exercise as an attempt to explore the “beautiful articulation of culture” and “what Africa is in relationship to America” (Jepson Lecture 2018). Her resultant mixed-media series, entitled “Sea Island Series” and exhibited initially in 1991, is inclusive of 38 gelatin silver photographs, 12 text panels, and 12 ceramic plates, and focuses primarily on creating a visual record of Sapelo and Daufuskie Islands.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Weems' series has been exhibited as recently as 2018, at the Jepson Center in Savannah, Georgia—the first time the images had traveled to a geographic region close to their original capture.

Weems' images are black and white studies of Gullah Geechee spaces and material culture. Aside from a single image of a woman grieving, Weems does not focus on any human subjects, instead emphasizing the centrality of geography and place in formations of Gullah Geechee identity through exterior shots of cemeteries and praise houses, and interior shots of restaurants and domestic spaces. Her text panels include stories and folklore gathered during her time on the islands, and cover subjects as diverse as the history of Ibo Landing, medicinal treatments for pregnant women, and Gullah Geechee death practices.

Weems' project feels both documentary and ethnographic, a cultural study of Sea Island place-making and material record. It is marked by what can only be described as the presence of an absence: in the absence of living Black communities, places and objects control a narrative of Gullah Geechee identity. In one photograph, the detached metal frame of a box spring hangs horizontally from a spindly tree, a relic of domesticity now ensconced by marsh grass and falling branches (Figure 1). In another photograph, four partially uprooted headstones, their markings illegible, are surrounded by saw palmetto trees, a large stucco home looming in the distance (Figure 2). In still another photograph, a metal trailer is bounded by hubcaps and makeshift fencing, a stark contrast to romanticized images of the antebellum south so prioritized in White imaginaries of Sea Island spaces (Figure 3).

And yet Weems' project feels discordant. If this is an ethnographic exploration of the Sea Islands, what does it record? Its title, as well as the absence of specific island names, evokes a pan-Sea Island mythology: the islands as a single unit of space, culture, and history rather than often discrete spaces that were difficult to navigate, particularly before the construction of

causeways and bridges.<sup>69</sup> The focus of Weems' photographs is space as demarcated by landscape, and landscape as demarcated by symbol that evokes a long legacy of Sea Island mythology: the punctuating spikes of a saw palmetto, the dripping elegance of Spanish moss, wavering strips of marsh grass, and shallow tidal inlets of standing water. These elements of landscape frame the fragile materiality of relic and remnant: the trailers, praise houses, and cemeteries that define Gullah Geechee place-making, without the presence of living Gullah Geechee communities. In some ways, Weems' work thematically evokes ethnographic studies of the islands from the 1930s, and participates in making visible a larger narration of loss as connected to land ownership, sovereignty, and culture.

In the same year as Weems' "Sea Island Series" initial exhibition, filmmaker Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* debuted—the first feature film by an African American woman to have a wide theatrical release. Inspired initially by her own ancestral/oral family history and a photographic series of Black women in the late nineteenth century by Harlem Renaissance photographer James Van Der Zee,<sup>70</sup> Dash—like Weems—traveled and researched on the Sea Islands in the 1980s. Dash's film, set at "Ibo Landing" on "the Sea Islands," per the opening scene, focuses on the Peazants, a Gullah family descended from enslaved Africans, and their voluntary migration North at the beginning of the twentieth century. The film, described by Toni Cade Bambara as "oppositional cinema" and by bell Hooks as an exploration in "mythic memory," visually focuses on sweeping seascapes, intimate close-ups of Black women's faces,

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<sup>69</sup> Weems' notes in her Jepson Lecture that the images in her series were taken on Daufuskie and Sapelo Islands, however at least one image—of Mary Jenkins' Praise House—had to have been taken on St. Helena Island. Mary Jenkins' Praise House still stands today.

<sup>70</sup> James Vanderzee also photographed Hampton University in 1907. His most famous photograph can be found here: *Whittier Preparatory School, Phoebus, Va. / J. Van Der Zee*. [Washington, D.C.: Graphics International Ltd., ; January from photograph taken 1907] Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <[www.loc.gov/item/2018663044/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2018663044/)>.

and scenes of communal foodways and food sharing on a single day prior to the family's departure (*Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Woman's Film* xiii, 30).

In many ways, the plot of *Daughters*—the impending migration of some Peazant family members and the inevitable grief of those who stay behind—is secondary to the film's intense sense of spatiality and temporality: the Peazant family's home is later revealed to be "Dawtuh"<sup>71</sup> Island, a small inland island connected by waterway to St. Helena. The camera lingers on sweeping seascapes of the Atlantic Ocean, disappearing sand dunes, thick groves of marsh grass, and lakes ensconced in vegetation. Like Weems, Dash is interested in the landscapes vital to Gullah place-making, but unlike Weems, Dash's narrative is carefully situated temporally and spatially: the film takes place in 1902, on Dataw Island, and evokes a broader historical narrative of Gullah migration from the Islands to Beaufort, Savannah, Charleston, New York, and Boston in the early twentieth century.

Six years after the film's theatrical release, Dash published *Daughters of the Dust* the novel, a sequel that continues to follow the Peazant family, set on the geographically specific location of Dataw Island. Taking place primarily in 1926, the novel follows two young Peazant family women, Elizabeth (the now grown "Unborn Child" from Dash's film) and her experiences teaching at a school on Dataw and working for a White family in Beaufort, and Amelia, the daughter of Myown Peazant, who was born and raised in Harlem, New York post-migration. In the tradition of Black female anthropologists of the early/mid-twentieth century like Zora Neale Hurston, Amelia returns to Dataw as an anthropology student writing a thesis about the Gullah, a

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<sup>71</sup> Dash's spelling of "Dawtuh" evokes the title of her film, and is one of the reasons why she chose this location for the Peazant family's home. In contemporary record, the island is called "Dataw," although it is worth noting that the island's name has been spelled many ways in official documents: Datha, Dawtaw, Dautah, and even Dawtuh, Dash's spelling, by a 1920 census enumerator. Dash, Julie. "Re: Dataw Island." Received by Carlye Schock, 19 Feb 2021. Email Interview.

gesture towards the consequences of the Island's legacy as primitivist site of ethnographic fantasy in American imaginaries. Through her experiences on the island and reconnections with family members, Amelia decides to return to Dataw permanently at the end of the novel after abandoning her research project, bringing her long-displaced mother, Myown, with her.

Dash's novel serves as an extension of the film: wherein the film covers a brief span of time and focuses on both an aesthetics of Black space and psychological portraits of migration, community, and trauma, the novel constructs a narrative around the material effects of leaving ancestral land or remaining through multiple geographies and timescapes. The novel moves geographies from the prehistoric formation of the Sea Islands and indigenous arrival, to Dawtuh Island in 1912, to Dawtuh Island in 1926, to Beaufort, South Carolina, and to Harlem, New York. The novel also frames, in greater detail, Dawtuh Island as overlapping and networked diaspora space, countering ethnographic research—and contemporary discourse—that aims to cast the islands as racially homogenous Black space. Through an expansive history of the land in its opening pages and a later account of St. Julien Last Child's Black/Cherokee family gathering, Island geography is rewritten as a dynamic space of place-negotiation and exchange.

In a conversation with bell hooks, Dash calls this rewriting of the Sea Islands an exercise in “mythic geography” and “poetic memory,” and an act of writing against dominant representations of Black life on the islands as agrarian and steeped in hardship and struggle (30). I argue that the *Daughters of the Dust* compendium<sup>72</sup> goes even further to enact an insurgent respatialization: through the imagination of spaces that belie settler colonial histories of Black land loss, the Islands become a site of multiplicity and heterogeneity, unknowable to

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<sup>72</sup> I owe this terminology to Tiffany Lethabo King, who posits Dash's film and novel as a “compendium” that should be read together. See pages 29, 34, and 165 of *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Duke UP, 2019.



ethnographic and anthropological endeavor. This respatialization counters long legacies of the islands as homogenously “Black” and devoid of culture, progress, and Black-enacted place-making. Instead, Dash makes visible the islands as a site of possibility and intersection that exists beyond settler colonial imaginaries. Dawtuh/Dataw Island in particular becomes a site of radical reimagining: contrary to recorded settler colonial geography and history, Dash’s Dawtuh is no longer an inland island; rather, it is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, and is the site of an ancient Indian mound (evocative of “Indian Hill” on St. Helena Island), Ibo Landing (evocative of Ibo Landing on St. Simons Island), Black/Cherokee intersectional diaspora, and most importantly, it is a place to which Amelia can return without the threat of dispossession or land loss.

I base my analysis of Dash’s work on Katherine McKittrick’s readings of Neil Smith’s “deep space” and Edouard Glissant’s “poetics of landscape.” McKittrick argues that both deep space, defined as “the production of space intensified and writ large,” and a poetics of landscape, defined as the narrative acts that constitute a relationship with the land, “*reposition* black geographies through taking notice of the ways in which space and place are fundamentally tied to the material landscape and daily social processes” (15, xxii). In turn, “Black geographies, imaginative and material, are critical of spatial inequalities, evidence of geopolitical struggles, and demonstrative of real and possible geographical alternatives” (17). Dash’s respatialization of the Sea Islands begins with these concepts as a frame: space and place are both decidedly not static, are produced and historically situated, and are discursively constructed in ways that impact geographic, material, and philosophical realities for living communities of people. As both theory and method, insurgent respatialization is the reimagination of space and place as *unvisible* to settler colonial cartographies, as existing beyond narratives of spatial inequity and

land dispossession, and thus capable of gesturing towards geographic, material, and philosophical possibility.

This kind of geographic imagining also requires a conception of place, as Doreen Massey argues, “not as points or areas on maps, but as integrations of space and time; as spatio-temporal events” (130). It also means resisting what McKittrick calls “geography's discursive attachment to stasis and physicality, the idea that space ‘just is,’ and that space and place are merely containers for human complexities and social relations” (xi). This means thinking beyond static disciplinary units that measure space in the name of ownership and conquest: nation, state, county, city, township, municipality, province, and plantation. It also means prioritizing the idea of place as both material location and epistemology—what Mishuana Goeman defines as more than just a “point on a graph or locale, but that which carries with it a ‘way of being in the world’” (9). A place-making that focuses on the spatially and temporally located lived experiences of Black and Indigenous communities is an act of material and imaginative resistance, laden with the possibilities of spatial justice and cartographic equity.

Dash’s place-making also confronts Sea Island discourse as geographic: as a spatial and temporal process that essentializes space/place in the name of individual ownership, static identity, and the preservation of state-sanctioned borders, barriers, and territories. Like maps, language as disciplinary structure makes Black and Indigenous communities legible to the State, and in the case of the Sea Islands, marks space as “isolated” and “backwater,” creating an anti-progress narrative that justifies the displacement of ancestral Gullah families from their land. As Dash respatializes the Sea Islands as a site of heterogeneity and African/Cherokee encounter, she also respatializes discursive legacies in a way that prioritizes Black and Indigenous women’s place-making experiences and challenges an historical imperative of land loss. Dash’s place-

making, then, can be defined as an act of insurgent cartography, as the limning out of spatial imaginaries using a map-makers' vocabulary—in the case of Dash, terms like “swamp,” “marsh,” “beach,” and “ocean,”—but not a map-makers' orientation. Indeed, Dash's Dataw Island cannot be located on a map—it is beyond the bounds of settler colonial knowability.

This respatialized Dataw is the site of Ibo landing, with sweeping views of the Atlantic Ocean; its marsh is the site of ancestral memory and reclaimed kinship relations; and its swamp is a site of Black/Cherokee homecoming. Dash's respatialization responds to a long legacy of ethnographic discourse of the Sea Islands as racially homogenous, culturally bereft, geographically isolated, and imbricated in the past—a discourse that has continues to frame spatial inequities for living Gullah communities. Dash also resists a temporally specific narrative of Dataw Island as connected to Black land loss and dispossession at the hands of White entrepreneurs from the North, who viewed ancestral Gullah land as prime real estate for luxury developments. The repercussions of this narrative would result in the total displacement of the Island's Black inhabitants by 1928, one year after the setting of Dash's novel. It is essential, however, to first limn out the discursive legacy to which Dash responds, and to understand both a genealogy of pan-Sea Island discourse and Dataw history in White imaginaries as tools of Black land theft and cultural erasure.

### **Backwater Discourse: An Ethnographic Legacy of the Sea Islands**

The “Sea Islands” and Gullah Geechee culture have incited ethnographic and anthropological fascination since the early twentieth century, and constitute, even in the contemporaneous moment, a site of cartographic and discursive struggle. Canonical American history, as recorded in documents like the federally-funded Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage

Commission charter, teaches that the Sea Islands were sparsely populated in the 1600s by Siouan-speaking tribes such as the Chicoras, Catawbias, Santee, Sewees, PeeDees, Waterees, and Congarees and Iroquoian-speaking tribes composed mostly of Cherokees, and Muskhogean-speaking tribes such as the Cusabos and Yamasees—all before the arrival of West African enslaved peoples in the late seventeenth century (42). The enslaved lived in isolated Black communities on White-owned plantations, responsible for growing rice, cotton, and indigo—the predominant products of South Carolina’s antebellum agricultural economy. Relative isolation, this history contends, is what contributed to the production of Gullah Geechee culture—inclusive of foodways, language, death ritual, land rights, and spiritual beliefs. After the Civil War, General Sherman’s 1865 Special Field Order No. 15 allowed Black freedmen the right to remain on the Sea Islands, and prohibited White ownership of land in the area. Many islands, however, were still owned by White proprietors, who hired freedmen to work as tenant farmers. Alternately, Black families also bought portions of previous plantation plots from the federal government and lived off their own land, abiding by a cultural mandate of land inheritance called “heirs property,” wherein land is held in common by a single family and passed down to living heirs upon death. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, wealthy, White-owned development companies began to see the Sea Islands as valuable capital: their lush landscapes, undisturbed coastlines, and seemingly “empty” acres of viable land proved lucrative for luxury real estate. Black families were bribed to sell their ancestral properties—some at extraordinarily unjust rates—in exchange for the whispered promises of financial prosperity on “the mainland” (46-51).

This history was largely established by a surge of ethnographic studies conducted on the islands by White anthropologists, scholars, musicologists, missionaries and photographers in the

1920s and 1930s. Academics like T.J. Woofter who visited St. Helena Island in the late 1920s, limned out the islands as racially pure “Black” space, arguing in his oft-quoted *Black Yeomanry: Life on St. Helena Island* that “Isolation has left the present population about as pure in Negro blood as could be found,” and therefore “Africa is here” (83, 9).<sup>73</sup> Writers like Woofter advanced the Sea Islands in American imaginaries as both temporally static (Africa as connected to the past) and racially homogenous (he eliminates all record of Native American settlement on St. Helena). This White fantasy of the Islands as racially “pure” Black space has shaped the political conditions of material injustice: the trauma of Black land loss at the hands of White developers, an active negation of Gullah Geechee sovereignty and self-determination, an ignorance of Gullah Geechee self-articulation as culturally Indigenous, and a spatial conflation of Gullah Geechee and the land, rather than an acknowledgement of both land rights and diaspora.

These same ethnographic and historical studies also shaped a discursive legacy of the Islands as “backwater,” “isolated,” and “fertile,” emphasizing imaginaries of space and place as fixed in anti-modern time, and Gullah Geechee culture as formed only through proxemics: in other words, the relative distance from Whiteness. In many ways, the Islands and the Gullah Geechee have been connected to the same anti-modern paradigms as Indigenous communities, what Philip Deloria defines as “primitivism, technological incompetence, physical distance, and cultural difference” (4). Many purportedly altruistic studies by both White and Black scholars have geographically cast the Islands in a shroud of detached mysticism. Historian Peter H. Wood describes the Islands in his 1974 book *Black Majority* as characterized by dislocation and

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<sup>73</sup> Woofter’s book was heavily critiqued by both DuBois and Carter Woodson. See Mark Ellis, *Race Harmony and Black Progress: Jack Woofter and the Interracial Cooperation Movement*. Indiana UP, 2013.

precarity: “a broad wedge of land which stretches from the hazy base of the Appalachian Mountains to the uneven rim of the Atlantic Ocean” (3). Alex Haley describes Daufuskie Island in his introduction to Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe's 1982 photographic series as both fixed in time and geographically distant: “an isolated, thickly wooded land strip with huge trees rising from the water's edge like ageless sentinels” (x). Historian Margaret Creel, in her 1988 book *Peculiar People*, describes Gullah Geechee ancestral lands as both agriculturally productive and connected deeply to the ocean: “Bordering on these coastal lowlands, stretching out into the arms of the sea, halfway between Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia, are a fringe of fertile islands” (15). Situated discursively as geographically distant, intimately connected to the Atlantic Ocean, disconnected from the primacy of patriarchal Nation and protective State, and yet wrought with a transfiguring beauty, the Sea Islands have been written as a site of racial homogeneity, both spatially and temporally static.

As a product of this settler colonial history, the Islands have been a site of cartographic controversy. They have been variably left off maps that focus instead on the South Carolina “mainland,” mapped precisely as a part of U.S. empire or war strategy for the successful navigation of ships, mapped as part of the West Indies to indicate their positionality in trade and export, mapped only by agricultural output in official government agricultural schedules, and most recently, mapped by landmark as a tourist destination of isolated beaches, luxury waterfront condos, and opportunities for “heritage tourism.” For example, a coastal survey completed by the U.S. government in 1851 shows St. Helena Sound as navigational asset, numerically marking soundings, bottoms, and sailing directions (Figure 4). A map created in 1873 shows all of Beaufort County with the names of major landowners, largely according to original plantation-era demarcations (Figures 5 and 6). In a 1979 map produced by the U.S. Department of

Agriculture focused on identifying farmland in Beaufort County, “fertile” tracts of land are marked by green and yellow (Figures 7 and 8). The Islands, then, have been both *hypervisible* in settler colonial record—as sites of European empire expansion, U.S. slave economy, agricultural production, and cultural preservation; and yet also *hyperinvisible* as sites of cultural encounter, intersecting diaspora, and Gullah Geechee placemaking.

American imaginaries of the Sea Islands have had material effects: discursive struggle has informed a politics of spatial injustice through envisioning the Islands and their inhabitants as temporally frozen in plantation narrative and anti-modern time, as cultural relics, ancient artifacts, vulnerable to disenfranchisement and exploitation, and the most African (pejoratively coined) of Americans. While *Daughters of the Dust* confronts this long legacy of discursive disenfranchisement, it also requires a concentrated narrowing of focus: by centralizing the geographic and temporal specificity of Dawtuh/Dataw Island in both 1902 (the film) and 1927 (the novel), Dash evokes an explicit settler colonial history and a narrative of cartographic inequity and dispossession at a very situated point in time and space.

### **Dawtuh/Dataw Island**

“Datha was to us a kind of terrestrial Paradise. With the help of sword and canon and foreign soldiery, the Yankee people have wrested it from us. They have impoverished a rich, rendered unhappy a happy family, scattered a united family and deprived you of your inheritance, small as it was.” --JJ Sams, former slaveholder on Dataw Island, 1905.

Modern geographical records indicate that Dataw is an 840-acre inland island, located between Lady's and St. Helena islands, about six miles from Beaufort. Labeled cartographically as part of the St. Helena Township, it is surrounded by the Morgan River and Jenkins Creek; the Atlantic Ocean is a four-mile boat ride away.<sup>74</sup> Since the early 1990s, it has been a private and gated residential community, composed of luxury homes, a golf course, recreational facilities, a community center, restaurant, and marina. With an average home price of \$500,000, a \$17,500 initiation fee, and between \$4,000 and \$6,000 in monthly HOA fees, the island has been constructed as an exclusive space reserved for those with both leisure time to spare and an excess of expendable income. Dataw is, of course, not unique in this respect: the nearby islands of Polo Wana<sup>75</sup> and Fripp have both met similar fates, and today exist as exclusive communities inaccessible to the general public.

Central to Dataw Island's contemporary identity, however, is a nostalgia for the antebellum past. Its advertising slogan, aimed at procuring new residents, reads: "Historical Charm. Natural Beauty. Extraordinary Living." The "historical charm" that Dataw's HOA references is evoked by the ruins of B.B. Sams' plantation complex, a site that has been named to the National Register of Historic Places as "one of the most intact examples of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century plantation community, with all of the facilities" (Dataw Brochure). Located near the southern tip of the island just a mile or so from the gatehouse, the tabby ruin complex is

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<sup>74</sup> According to census definition, St. Helena Township includes all islands south and east of the Coosaw and Beaufort Rivers: Morgan, Judge, Dataw, Lady's, Pine, Warsaw, Gibbs, Cane, Cat, Pola Wana, Fig, Phillips, Bay Point, Capers, Pritchards, Fripp, Hunting, and Harbor. This makes finding records about Dataw in particular difficult, and reinforces its invisibility in a pan-Island mythology.

<sup>75</sup> Polowana/Polo Wana Island is recorded as the first "official" Native American reservation in the United States. In 1712, the state legislature "returned" Polawana Island in Beaufort County to the "Cusaboe Indians," and in 1738 offered it to the Natchez, but the offer was not accepted. Polawana Island continued to be a reservation at least until 1762. See Bill Riski, "Lower Coast Indians," [www.datawhistory.org/52-sams-in-52-weeks/lower-coast-indians/](http://www.datawhistory.org/52-sams-in-52-weeks/lower-coast-indians/), Accessed 25 March 2021.



composed of a dairy, blade house, kitchen, overseer's house, slave quarters, and a main home, and is flanked by pristine palmetto landscaping, bright green tennis courts, and a prize-winning 18-hole golf course. Visiting Dataw is an exercise in remediating contrasting realities of both time and space: the eye moves from the oyster-shelled rubble of a 19<sup>th</sup> century plantation home to a pickleball court; from the 9<sup>th</sup> hole of a verdant golf course that overlooks a luxuriously landscaped man-made pond to the crumbling outline of a 19<sup>th</sup> century dwelling for the enslaved; from the terraced verandas of a multi-million dollar home with a circular cobblestone driveway to an expanse of marshy, narrow beach—the ancestral land of the Gullah.

Knowing Dataw's recorded settler history—the one celebrated by the current Dataw HOA—is important in understanding this strange exercise in remediation. In the antebellum era, B.B. Sams, a wealthy White plantation owner, along with his brother Lewis Reeves, inherited the island from his father. The brothers divided the island in half—B.B. built a plantation on the south end, and L.R. built a plantation on the north end—and ran a prosperous cotton business through the labor of enslaved persons. In 1861, Beaufort fell to the Union Army, and the brothers fled the island, along with their families. According to slave schedules, the brothers owned 100 enslaved persons in 1850, and many of these families would remain on the island for decades after emancipation.

Dataw's official ownership changed hands many times after the Civil War. In 1875, William Irvin, a New Yorker who purchased the north end of Dataw in 1864, entered into an agreement with eight Black tenant farmers: each farmer received ten acres guaranteed by crop liens. Likely freedmen and women who had been among Dataw's formerly enslaved, these farmers and their descendants worked the land for 53 years, until the island's purchase in 1928 by Kate Gleason. Gleason, an engineer and businesswoman, had a vision for the so-called South

Carolina “low country”: with the investment of Northern money, she believed, it could become a recreational haven for wealthy White families looking to escape bitter winters and find solace in the water and sunshine of the coast. In the early 1920s, she built an artist’s colony on nearby Lady’s Island, and a luxury housing complex in Beaufort, but she reserved Dataw as her own personal respite. She ordered causeways built to allow her easier access to the island, and she built a seawall along the southwest shore to protect from encroaching tidal waves and storms.

Gleason planned to build a sprawling house for herself on the northeast shore of Dataw—an exact replica of B.B. Sams’ plantation home. She was fascinated by its antebellum history, and called Dataw, in a letter urging her nephew Emmett to visit, her “island empire,” full of “fascinating ruins, -arrow heads, pottery, church, trees, mills and houses.” In a photograph taken in the early 1930s on the island, Gleason stands in dramatic profile against a massive live oak tree, a substantial walking stick in her right hand, her eyes tilted slightly upwards towards the tree’s gnarled trunk (Figure 9). In framing herself as the well-heeled explorer of an unspoilt landscape, Gleason evokes a romanticized antebellum history of the island, a land laden with artifacts and remnants ripe for discovery. Taken by photographer and journalist Frank M. Hohenberger, the other images in Gleason’s Dataw series focus on the ruins of B.B. Sams’ plantation house and graveyard: seemingly straightforward documentary images of Gleason’s much-valued ruined treasures.

Before Gleason was able to fully realize her reconstructive plantation dream, she passed away in 1933. She left the island to her secretary, Elizabeth Rowland, and the Rowland family used it as a personal vacation spot and hunting preserve until its sale in 1983 to the development branch of ALCOA, an aluminum company. ALCOA’s dream for the island, in many ways, was an extension of Gleason’s for the South Carolina lowcountry: they began construction on a

1,100-home gated recreational community, marketed towards wealthy retired Northerners with money to spare and an affinity for coastal living.

According to census records, the Black tenant farmers that were forcibly removed from the island in 1928 mostly relocated to other islands in the St. Helena township. Little record exists detailing their lives or their work on Dataw, aside from a few period photographs and census records. An archaeological survey performed by ALCOA prior to construction on the island determined that the primary location of tenant homes and farming activity was “along the north shore of Dataw, where there are now a series of remnant tenant sites that have been largely destroyed by shoreline erosion” (43). The same survey goes on to note that “Only limited information on the tenant settlement is available from maps. Several plats are available but none shows any houses aside from the known plantation structures” (43).

Dataw’s Black history—of the same era Dash evokes in her film and novel—is unmapped and made invisible by a settler colonial record preoccupied with antebellum White prosperity. Dash’s film, set in 1902, and the novel, set in 1927, both occur within the 67 years of Black-majority tenancy on the island. These 67 years, beginning with Beaufort’s fall to the Union to Gleason’s purchase of the Island, exist in fragmented material form only as incomplete census records and photographs with little contextual or identifying information. Through locating her film and novel geographically and temporally within the space of Dataw, Dash evokes a White imaginary of the Island, long advertised by ethnographers and anthropologists, and now touted by development companies and real estate magnates. Even more importantly, through a respatialization of the ocean, the beach, the marsh, and the swamp, Dash writes Dataw island as African/Cherokee diaspora space, and as an embodied geography that limns experience as cartographic. This imagination of space belies settler colonial histories of Black land loss and

casts the Islands as sites of multiplicity and heterogeneity, unknowable to ethnographic and anthropological fetishization. Dataw Island—the Sams’ family’s ancestral home, marked by the rubble of their ruined plantation dreams—is reclaimed as a site of place-making and possibility.

### **Mapping Ancestral Memory: The Atlantic/the Beach/Ibo Landing**

Settler colonial histories of the Sea Islands cast “the ocean” and “the beach” as sites of arrival: where dehumanized Black bodies emerge from the hold of slave ship and are imagined as capital, product, fungible, and unhuman. Historians like Mary Granger, in her 1940 pivotal ethnography titled *Drums and Shadows*, describe the Sea Islands’ waterways as prime conveyors of captive and dehumanized persons. Granger writes that “The tidewater coastline and large navigable rivers penetrating for miles into the interior facilitated the landing of cargo,” emphasizing the geographic structures of Island waterways as uniquely positioned for the slave trade (xviii). In other words, the Sea Islands were recorded as prime sites of arrival: uniquely positioned on the Atlantic Ocean, they were conducive to the transport of enslaved persons and their eventual transport to markets in Charleston.

Early twentieth century narratives respatialize Sea Island oceanscapes and beaches as sites of leisure and recreational opportunity: a chance to commune with nature, bathe in the tides, and seek reprieve from the stifling heat of South Carolina summers. This narrative redraws the beach and the ocean as sites of White escape, and disassociates its contours from an enslaved past. Anthropologist Guion Griffis Johnson recorded in 1928 that wealthy antebellum planters would spend time on a small beach on St. Helena during the summer months, at a “health resort”

called St. Helenaville.<sup>76</sup> Johnson's description of the beach typifies a geography cast as recreational site: "Here was a long, sandy beach where one might bathe in the salt water at high tide and where one might have fresh cool breezes from the ocean through most of the hot summer days..." (110). In the 1920s, entrepreneurs like Kate Gleason were drawn to the "primordial" beauty of the Sea Island coasts, and envisioned luxury housing and artist's colonies designed as an escape from an encroaching Northern urbanism. The beach—and open Atlantic Ocean access via islands like Hunting, Fripp, and Edisto—constituted the primary draw. Even now, South Carolina encourages tourism through an Atlantic discourse of mysticism and beauty. The Beaufort website suggests that "The Atlantic Ocean not only defines each of the sea islands, it unites them in an eternal symphony, creating a rarified music where the waves meet the shore" (link).

Dash's Atlantic is a vast departure from this dehistoricized romanticization. The beach and the ocean are reclaimed as sites of ancestral memory, resistance, sustenance, and power. Rather than transhistorical, Dash's Atlantic is both temporally and geographically specific: it is set in 1902 and 1927, and it is located off the coast of Dataw Island. While settler colonial mapping reveals Dataw Island as bounded by creeks and rivers, connected by waterway to St. Helena, and four miles by boat from the Atlantic Ocean, Dash's Dataw prominently fronts the Atlantic. For Dash, the ocean is always on view and in-view, and its breezes, tides, and proximity controls Island space. In the novel, Elizabeth can hear "voices floating across the sand" from Nana's ancestral home tucked in a grassland marsh, and Amelia can see "glimmers of light reflecting off the water..." from Eula and Eli's family residence (23, 74). The Atlantic,

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<sup>76</sup> There is little evidence for the historic St. Helenaville; it was thought to be destroyed by storms that broached in island in 1893 and again in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was located near Frogmore, on the northeast side of the Island, and consisted of a small village and resort.

and a large swathe of connected beach, shape the contours of sensory experience on the Island and structure Peazant family place-making.

Similarly, much of the film takes place on the beach: it is where the Peazant family prepares and later shares a meal, babies are nursed, children play in the surf, and where Yellow Mary, Iona, and Trulia rest and dream about traveling, the future, and alternate lives. It is the site of intentional relationality and place-making: quite literally, it is a geography that most witnesses the act of creating a shared life. *Daughters of the Dust*, however, was not filmed on Dataw Island, but on Hunting Island—a 5,000 acre barrier island with frontage on the Atlantic.<sup>77</sup> In the antebellum area and even post-Civil War, Hunting Island served as a hunting preserve for wealthy White planters, and is now maintained as a state park and marine-life sanctuary by the state of South Carolina. For practical reasons, due to its involvement in a legacy of Black land loss and contemporaneous existence as an exclusive gated-community, Dataw Island in the late 1980s could not be the site of Dash’s filmic imaginary. Geographically, its narrow beaches that only afford views of sinuous, water-logged marsh could not hold Dash’s vision of a Dataw whose preeminent view is that of the Atlantic itself.

This Dataw as Atlantic Ocean frontage evokes McKittrick’s framing of geography as “an alterable terrain,” despite the allusion of fixity and stasis imposed by the colonial state. McKittrick also affirms the Atlantic Ocean as a resonant Black geography, “through which the production of space can be imagined on diasporic terms” (xvii). Dash respatializes Dataw not as inland, bounded, and insular, but diasporic: as the site of arrival *and* departure, and as connected to the weightiness of ancestral lineage as symbolized by the ocean itself. A Dataw bounded only

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<sup>77</sup> Interestingly, this fact is not recorded in literature about Dash’s film. When I visited St. Helena Island in February of 2021, however, Dr. Marie Gibbs of the Penn Center, who was involved in filming, confirmed the set location as Hunting Island.

by the Atlantic has a direction connection to Africa as a point of origin, but not an historically static Africa—an Africa that is the past-in-the-present, a recognition of *how* and *where* Africa manifests in the contemporaneous moment.

In the novel, Elizabeth, now a teacher at a small school on the island, walks along the beach during a science lesson with her pupils, and a small boy says:

‘Aint nuttin but de big water out dere’

‘On the mainland they call the big water the ocean,’ Elizabeth explained. ‘It’s so big it covers half the world. But on the other side, there are people living there.’ She stared out across the waves.

‘We come from them, they come from Afric.’

‘Nuh-uh. I aint come from no place but heah!’ (41-42)

As she looks out across the Atlantic Ocean, Elizabeth recognizes a world beyond the island and even beyond Beaufort, a place described in the novel as “the mainland.” Elizabeth is the novel’s most well-travelled character; she has left the island for schooling and work, and has the opportunity to travel abroad to Paris with her former employers, the wealthy White Bouvier sisters. In this scene, Elizabeth looks directionally away from Beaufort—the White settler state—and towards a geographic possibility that extends into Atlantic space. Her acknowledgement of “people living there” at once evokes a recognition of the enslaved past, a point of origin beyond the island’s geographies, and a sense of geographic possibility—a present and future beyond Dataw’s shores. Interestingly, her comments are met with the disbelief of her pupil: he cannot imagine a world beyond the island and across the ocean, or an origin divorced from its contours. His response is to proclaim his indigeneity, which is at once an avowal of belonging and a

negation of diasporic displacement. A world beyond the ocean threatens his sense of selfhood; instead, he proclaims that he is already in place and at the site of origin. There has been no other.

Similarly, Dataw's beach also evokes an enslaved past and a legacy of resistance. Dash respatializes Ibo Landing, traditionally mapped on the banks of Dunbar Creek on St. Simon's Island, as part of Dataw. In this case, "Ibo Landing" as narrative, idea, and geographic specificity becomes kaleidoscopic: Dash's location of Ibo Landing on Dataw suggests that there are, in fact, many Ibo Landings, or even that Ibo Landing as a site of ancestral memory and resistance is everywhere, pervading Sea Island geographies. In a conversation with bell hooks about the film, Dash notes that "...interestingly enough, in my research, I found that almost every Sea Island has a little inlet, or a little area where people say 'This is Ibo Landing. This is where it happened. This is where this thing really happened'" (30). Ibo Landing as kaleidoscopic becomes an act of resistance: if Ibo Landing is everywhere, then Ibo Landing as a material site becomes *unvisible* to settler colonial cartographies—it cannot be defined, mapped, located, or made legible to the state.

In the novel, as Amelia walks along the beach with her cousin Ben, she momentarily glimpses material remains of what appears to be the actual landing built by the Ibo:

She looked out past the edge of the land spit that lay south and saw irregular bits of wood sticking out of the water. As the waves fell and the light changed, she could see that the wood had been worn away by water and wind, carving crude features that reminded her of African masks in Professor Colby's office. From the right angle and with a simple twist of the imagination, one could imagine the masks headed out to sea. (100)



Ben then tells Amelia the story of Ibo Landing, contextualizing this material sighting with the lineage of narrative. But it is Amelia's glimpse of Ibo Landing and Dash's placement of Ibo on Dataw, that emphasizes the idea that geography is not static, but is produced—it is changeable, mutable, malleable, affected by discursive legacy, narrative, and time. Ibo Landing as visible material reality even changes within Amelia's momentary field of vision—the waves and the light transform the wood, and it fleetingly looks like something else altogether. Not the remnants of a wooden landing, splintered and worn by Atlantic tides, but African masks, walking out across the ocean's waves.

A Dataw Island that is both the site of Ibo Landing and bounded only by the Atlantic becomes a locus of ancestral memory, and a place that centers *transit* in the production of space. It is at once a reminder of diaspora and a reclamation of movement and return not as settler-colonial tools of dispossession and displacement, but as implements of place-making and belonging.

### **The Swamp: Imagining African/Cherokee Diaspora Space**

Slaveholders of the antebellum era wrote frequently about Sea Island swamplands as spaces that needed to be “reclaimed.” Once reclaimed—either cleared, flooded, or both— they were considered fertile agricultural assets, and made for prime cotton production. In an 1844 narrative, Mr. Seabrook of Edisto Island wrote “[these reclaimed swamps] which lie along the line where the salt and fresh water meet...are capable of yielding an amount of cotton wool equal to the yearly exports of the state” (Johnson 12). However, this economically prosperous reclaimed swampland was still a threatening landscape: a breeding ground for mosquitos and

snakes, swamplands were often thickly wooded and prone to overwhelming flooding, which could destroy a cotton crop as quickly as it could yield.

The swamp, as both geographic site and symbol, also became a site of White fear of potential Black insurrection. Novels like Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1856 *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* wrote "the swamp" as the site of a deadly insurrection against the plantation structures of labor, planned by a band of maroons. The swamp's threat of danger, amplified by its mystified seclusion, loomed large in the White imaginary. As a sharp contrast, Dash draws the swamp as a site of Black/Cherokee overlap, a site of homecoming, and of material Indigenous presence. The swamp is where Iona and Julien Last Child come for the winter gathering of Julien's diasporic Black/Cherokee family, and where they live in a "circular house that was so different from the Peasant homes" (178). It is the site of a burial ground—"a large mound that at first glimpse to an outsider would be mistaken for a hill," evocative of St. Helena's so-called "Indian Hill," an archaeological site close to Frogmore (186). The swamp thus becomes a place of ancestral memory and return: an overlapping Black/Cherokee diaspora space that actively participates in world-making. If settler colonial discourse writes the swamp as fertile, remote, and dangerous, its seclusion cast as pejorative and connected to a cultural backwardness, Dash remaps "seclusion" as both protective and celebratory, an opportunity to make place, exercise sovereignty, and self-define without the encroaching arm of the patriarchal nation state.

In a pivotal scene, St. Julien's family returns to the swamp on Dataw Island for a winter gathering. Amelia, as both anthropologist in training and spectator, notes that she "could see where the bloodlines of the ancient people, the African captives, and the whites had melded together," describing their skin hues as "ranging from white to jet black, and the hair textures

from straight to kinky" (184). She goes on to note a particular branch of the family, the Tallmans, as having both dark skin and "sharp features and easily stood over six feet"; she describes them as a "reincarnation" of a "nomadic African tribe" (184). Contrary to Dash's portrait of St. Julien in *Daughters of the Dust* the film as the last of his family—a remnant—the novel represents Julien as only one part of a broader and diverse community of diasporic peoples, drawing ancestral heritage from Africa, America, and Europe. During an evening ceremony, a member of Julien's family proclaims:

“We are the Last Childs. The last free children of the Cherokee nation. We Last Childs a strong people, a stubborn people who turn our back on the white man's march and follow the way show by our ancestors who hid from the Spanish and the white soldiers who came after them. We come from five generations and call places name Edisto, John's Island, Dafusky, Tybee, Warsaw, Ossabaw, Sapelo, and Okefenokee home. We travel by the ancient waterways, Ogeechee, Canoochee, Ocmulgee, and the mighty Altamaha River’ ” (187).

As any mention of Black/Cherokee identity evokes a history of Cherokee slave-holders and a denial of Black freedmen after Emancipation, this articulation of the Last Childs as “the last free children of the Cherokee nation,” seems to gesture towards their positionality as—or inclusion of—maroons or Cherokee freedmen. More important than this specificity, as Tiffany King has noted, Dash appears here to “depict a Cherokee peoplehood that is open and supple enough to incorporate Black blood, people, and life in ways that alter and sustain Cherokee identity” (164). Dash's representation of intersecting Black/Cherokee mobilities and assertion of diaspora—the Last Childs claim at least nine areas as “home” and enact a seasonal return to

Dataw—affirms what Massey calls “coexisting spatial heterogeneity”—the possibilities of multiplicitous and overlapping space (68).

Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver has argued for what he terms “the Red Atlantic,” a “multilane highway that American indigenes traveled back and forth in surprising numbers,” encompassing both “the Atlantic and its major adjacent bodies of water” and potentially “far into the interior of the Americas” (15). Similar to Paul Gilroy’s black Atlantic, Weaver tracks historical examples of Indigenous communities engaging in “radical mobility while still being tied to or rooted in place” (18). Gregory Smithers similarly argues for an acknowledgement of an often-obscured Cherokee history of diaspora and migration. Between 1756 and 1945, Smithers outlines, the Cherokee were highly mobile, geographically dynamic, yet also tied to their ancestral homelands—contrary to Cherokee representation in settler colonial imaginaries as a sedentary people (4-8). These radical reconceptions of Indigenous geographies—both as mobile in trans-Atlantic spaces, and simultaneously rooted and routed, in the case of Cherokee history—gestures towards the extent to which imaginaries of physical stasis and immobility have underwritten Indigenous disenfranchisement.

The illusion of immobility is, of course, also intimately tied to Gullah Geechee communities: although the Gullah Geechee diaspora includes Mexico, the Bahamas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Cuba (amongst numerous other spaces), the Gullah Geechee are discursively defined as contained by their ancestral lands. Anti-Black discourse, as J.T. Roane notes, often writes Black communities as “collapsed into their environment” (283). This environmental and geographical conflation, as a manifestation of White supremacy, seeks to render Black lives definable and legible to the State—as well as bordered and bounded by clearly defined cartographic limitations.

Significantly, Dash's novel addresses a radical mobility that moves beyond established archival record. She casts St. Julien's family as Cherokee, but also inclusive of maroons and freedmen, and suggests that his ancestors avoided removal by seeking refuge in predominately Black spaces. In this sense, Dash writes Black geographies as hyperinvisible space: removed from settler colonial vision and thus capable of becoming a place of security, safety, and overlapping diaspora.

In a section that focuses on her personal story and eventual marriage to Julien, Iona tells Amelia that during the days of removal, "Julien family never quit de lan. De old spirits show dem de sacred place where de army caint go" (174). She goes on to say "Dey ancien an de captive, dey been here all along" (174). Dash constructs Dataw and the broader "Sea Islands" as overlapping diaspora space, but also positions Black and Native communities as equal heirs: in other words, the lines between "Black" and "Native American" are blurred. Even more significantly, Dash gestures towards the possibilities of Black/Cherokee encounter to do what S.A. Smythe indicates is possible through concepts like the Black Mediterranean: to instigate "cultural syncretism, intimacy and expansiveness, while still leaving room for geospecificity within a transnational frame" (7). Through a representation of Black/Cherokee geographic and cultural overlap, Dash's respatialization of the swamp importantly counters a U.S. sanctioned narrative of Sea Island-located racial purity—a narrative rooted in anti-Blackness. The Sea Islands as racially homogenous space instead become a site of dynamic movement, migration, diaspora, and transit, created through Black/Cherokee relationality.

## **The Marsh: Subterranean Geographies of the Body in the Land**

By geographic definition, a marsh is land imbued with water. It is low-lying, surrounded by tall, wavering grass, and nearly always wet: even the lightest of rains can cause unprecedented flooding. On the antebellum Sea Islands, the marsh was the space most defined by the presence of Whiteness. It was often the site of the main plantation house, with adjacent quarters for the enslaved, kitchens, storage facilities, and an overseer's complex. On Dataw, the Sams family lived in their island plantation home year-round, only leaving temporarily for their more luxurious Beaufort estate during the hottest weeks of the summer (SOURCE). The Sams' family marshland complex was particularly developed: surrounded by a cornfield and a fruit orchard, its crowning jewel was a tabby plantation house, replete with "elegant flanking wings" and "united into a common façade by columned porches, achieving symmetry and emphasizing the Palladian Villa form" (Historic Dataw Island Brochure).

Aside from the marsh as a site of White presence and control, it was also of enormous monetary value in a plantation economy: marsh grass was harvested as an important fertilizer for cotton crop. An article in the 1837 *Southern Agriculturist*, written specifically about Sea Island agricultural practices, notes that "Some planters object to marsh, and say that it produces 'blue' in cotton; but no one need apprehend this, if the marsh has been put into the land so as to give it sufficient time to rot before the cotton-plant reaches it." On Dataw, marsh grass was also used for fertilizer, but marshland constituted a majority of the island's cotton fields. Before the Civil War, dikes were installed on Dataw's salt marshes in order to turn them into fast-producing cotton fields. According to the Agricultural Census of 1860, just before the beginning of the Civil War, Dataw Island was inhabited by over 100 enslaved persons, and was the "single most valuable plantation in the Beaufort area" (Historic Dataw Island Brochure).

Dash respatializes Dataw's grassland marshes as sites of ancestral memory and spatial disruption. She writes the east side of the island as the location of Nana's house, where Elizabeth still lives amongst the glass bottle trees and walls collaged with photographs, newsprint, and letters written home to Nana from children who migrated to places far from Dataw (81). Nana's house as a geography both maps ancestral memory and serves as a material family archive, connecting Elizabeth to a genealogy of place that she is hesitant to leave, despite its state of disrepair. But Dash's most significant marsh, while devoid of White presence, is still the site of White relic: it is a large expanse of marshy meadow bordered by woods, the location of the old plantation with foundational ruins and broken-down slave shacks, used on occasion by island inhabitants in need of seclusion and privacy from family members. Here, Amelia can see the ruins of the old Wilkerson place, a formerly "large plantation, worked by many captives," and she notes "the fire-scorched foundation stones of the Big House on the far edge of the pasture" (224). She also sees the "vine-and-weed covered ruins of small shacks," the former homes of the enslaved, still standing in close proximity to the plantation house's ruins (225).

This marsh, formerly "worked by many captives," significantly reveals the geographic materiality of an enslaved past (224). While plowing the meadow, Amelia's cousin Lucy discovers the bones and irons of enslaved persons: "...she brushed the dirt from a pair of rusted shackles, a chain running from them into the ground...her eyes filled with tears as she recognized a human leg bone" (227). Lucy's dreams of building a house and creating a life here with her love, Charlie, planting the land and reaping economic profit from its harvest, are displaced by its spatial histories. The geography of this Dataw marsh is at once disrupted by the body, but as elder Miz Emma Julia reminds Lucy, the land is also constituted by these bodies:

“‘Dey lay out in dat field for nobody know how long. Dat why dat field so rich wit de earth. Out elders give it dey life blood’” (241).

Dash’s rendering of this marsh challenges a notion of space as a passive surface that is acted upon by human agents. It forces a recognition of *subterranean* spatiality, an acknowledgement of what happens when we dig beneath the plantation ruins, the marsh grass, the dust, the dirt, the subsoil, the humus. In the case of Dataw, we find Black bodies *in* the land—even after they are no longer *on* the land—unvisible to a settler colonial mapping that prioritizes topography, the surface, and what is easily discernible. This is an evocation—in the most literal sense—of the body as geographic; of geography as constituted by bodies; of the body itself as a spatiality that shapes the process of place-making. The land, Dash reminds us, is both shaped by enslaved Black labor in life, and contoured by Black bodies in death.

In order to put the souls of the formerly enslaved to rest, Miz Emma Julia leads the Peasant family through a reburial ceremony, using “‘water from de river, de swamp, de pond, de creek, de big water’” (239). She reminds her family that the uncovered bones came from “‘de ancients who seed dis earth wit deir tears, sweat, an blood!’” (242). During the ceremony, Amelia sees that “the earth began to move,” and she wonders “how many more captives lay in secret places, waiting to be uncovered and brought home” (242). The ceremony, as an act of repatriation, causes another seismic geographic shift—the land itself shudders and rolls, emphasizing Goeman’s contention that “spatial production is not only formed at the moment of colonization” but it is in a state of constant evolution “through intimate relationships” (85).

Dash’s rendering of the marsh also evokes McKittrick’s reminder that mapping black landscapes “requires a return to and engagement with painful places, worlds where black people were and are denied humanity, belonging, and formal citizenship” (33). This scene in the marsh



writes Black geographies—as tied to a painful history of the land—as shifting, rupturing, and shuddering both materially and philosophically, in response to contemporaneous Black presence and relationship.

Dash’s respatialization of the marsh also evokes and counters archaeological surveys performed on Dataw Island in the early 1990s by ALCOA prior to beginning construction on their first series of luxury homes. In a diagram titled “Middle House, Unit 33 Profile,” surveyors map the soil layers of Dataw’s main inhabited marsh, making visible five strata of subterranean space (Figure 10). Each layer is labeled by material discovery that reveals something significant archaeologically about inhabitation on Dataw: charred wood, ash, fallen tabby, brick, and mortar. Archaeologically, each substance marks an event in time: a tabby house is erected, a likely catastrophic fire destroys it, and the decomposing wood of a previously built structure is revealed on top of a bed of golden, loamy sand (62). An accompanying chart, titled “Artifact Class Frequencies for the Middle House,” lists clock parts and beads, farm tools and table glass, wire nails and brass finials discovered in the same location through excavation processes (Figure 11). These relics of place-making are counted, tabulated, classified by specific geo-location found, and analyzed for their conformity to established patterns of plantation artifact distribution in the South Carolina “low country” (70).

These surveys demonstrate the extent to which the settler colonial state views subterranean geographies as a key to knowing the land. They imagine place as defined through an archaeological discourse of soil sediment and material artifact; the writing of narrative history through ground penetration and probe. Dash’s counter to this brand of subterranean geography is demarcated by an acknowledgement of Black land relationship that affirms space as *produced* by Black presence and absence—subterranean and otherwise. It is making visible what McKittrick

and Clyde Woods call “inserting Black geographies into our worldview and our understanding of spatial liberation,” an act that can “move us away from territoriality, the normative practice of staking a claim to place” (5). The space of Dataw is produced by enslaved Black labor, and in Dash’s narrative, it is these ancestral spatial resonances that unite with the place-making of the Peazants to stake a claim to Gullah sovereignty that challenges settler colonial notions of land ownership and control.

### **Geographic Resonances: Enacting Spatial Possibility**

In an interview on St. Helena in the 1930s, anthropologist Clyde Vernon Kiser asked an interviewee described as “Male; left Island in 1909 at age 17,” to explain why he migrated away from his ancestral home. He replied:

In thirty years from now, the Island will be owned by the white people...It will no longer be an Island owned by colored people. The entering wedge is being driven. Miss K., though she claims to be doing great service down there, is in reality just getting rich herself. She is buying up land every chance she gets. What does she do with it after she buys it? She puts a fence around it and puts up ‘No Trespassing’ signs. (136)

The “Miss K” to whom the interviewee refers can be none other than Kate Gleason, whose purchase of Dataw in 1928 was accompanied by her continued developments in Beaufort and on Lady’s Island—all predicated on the necessity of Black land loss. The interviewee’s words prove to be prophetic: according to census records, in 1920 Beaufort County was 78.4 % Black. In 2010, that number dropped to 21.9 %, largely due to the continued development of private resorts on Fripp, Dataw, Polowana, and Cat Islands. A digital project produced in 2020

by Queen Marquette Goodwine of the Gullah Geechee Nation and a team of students at the University of Minnesota summarizes the geographic and cultural disenfranchisement of Gullah Geechee this way: “Predatory investors who exploit the heirs property system can create gated areas, remove access to burial sites, and privatize beaches along with traditional fishing waterways. The area becomes gentrified, and Gullah/Geechee subsistence fishing families struggle for food sovereignty” (St. Helena Project).

Still, of all the so-called “South Carolina Sea Islands,” St. Helena has remained the most undeveloped by real estate magnates—much of the island’s acreage in 2021 consists of Black owned, multi-generational family farms. Governed in part by the Beaufort County Open Land Trust, St. Helena has been protected from the kind of condo and resort building that has overwhelmed nearby islands. However, St. Helenians are still in jeopardy: as recently as October 2020, Beaufort County threatened the auction of 831 properties for delinquent taxes, including 173 on St. Helena Island, without due consideration of Covid-19 pandemic impact. On October 5<sup>th</sup>, 56 island properties were sold, and hundreds of Gullah community members were displaced.<sup>78</sup>

It is hard to believe that this very real spatial inequity is not due, in part, to a White-imagined discursive legacy of the Sea Islands as backwards, fertile, isolated, racially homogenous, and culturally barren. In some ways, an anthropological and ethnographic fetishization of the Gullah Geechee as the “most African of Americans” has resulted in a discursive captivity; in other words, the way White scholars have narrated imaginaries of Sea Island space has molded continuing spatial injustice. Even the language of the U.S. Congress’ response to these inequities—the creation of the so-called Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage

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<sup>78</sup> Non-profits like the Penn Center, via their Land Preservation Assistance Program, are currently raising funds to help displaced or soon-to-be-displaced Gullah residents pay their back taxes.

Corridor—models a type of state-legislated spatial demarcation, in addition to enacting no real social change in the lived realities of Gullah Geechee people. The GGCHC’s most significant contribution has been the creation and installation of historic markers within a 1,200 acre tract of land from Pender County, North Carolina to St. John’s County, Florida, which has largely served to valorize the notion of White-centric cultural heritage tourism and invites even more demand for upscale vacation rentals on ancestral Gullah Geechee land.

As Goodwine notes, however, “Gullah/Geechee people continue to fight back with resilience and determination” (St. Helena Project). When I visited St. Helena Island in February of 2021, St. Helenians I spoke with at the Penn Center and the Gullah Geechee Visitor’s Center were quick to tell the story of Julie Dash’s 1989 filming of *Daughters of the Dust* on Hunting Island, her crew’s stay on St. Helena, and the way Dash herself involved locals—particularly schoolchildren—in the film’s production. The film’s resonances—material and philosophical—loom large on the island, over 30 years later. This, then, is the power of Dash’s imaginary: her respatialization of Dataw Island, temporally located in 1902 and 1927, critiques the artificially constructed geographies of Sea Island discourse and posits a spatial possibility that allows not only for a visual record of survivance, but also the act of return.

At the end of the novel, Amelia returns to Dataw permanently with her mother, Myown, the daughter of Hagar, and a woman grown fragile from her displacement in the hostile, urban environment of Harlem. At the same time, Elizabeth receives her father Eli’s blessing to go with the Bouvier sisters to Paris as a travelling companion. With these acts of transit, the discursive boundary erected around Dataw and the larger Sea Islands becomes porous and permeable, affirming the geographic possibilities of diasporic movement but also of homecoming. McKittrick notes that a poetics of landscape can “allow black women to critique the boundaries

of transatlantic slavery, rewrite national narratives, respatialize feminism, and develop new pathways across traditional geographic arrangements,” which ultimately results in thinking about how “more humanly workable geographies might be imagined” (xxiii). In Dash’s vision, these more humanly workable geographies include a Sea Island where “backwater” becomes culturally rooted in both ancestry and place, “isolated” transforms into protection from White-centric assimilative forces, and “fertile” equates to agricultural and food sovereignty for Gullah communities. Settler colonial cartographies of swamp, beach, ocean, and marsh become Black/Cherokee overlapping diaspora space, a link to ancestral memory, and sites where the traumatic relationship between White-owned land and Black bodies is repatriated and reclaimed.

Through these discursive respatializations, return is reinstated as an act that is possible, geographic, philosophic, and capacious. According to recorded history, Dataw Island was purchased by Kate Gleason in 1928, one year after the setting of Dash’s novel. The island’s Black inhabitants were evicted, and census records indicate that they mostly relocated to farmland on St. Helena Island or nearby Port Royal. Since the late 1980s, Dataw can only be accessed by road via a gatehouse, staffed 24-7 by a guard who admits only official island residents and their verified guests, a foreboding disciplinary presence in charge of policing who belongs and who does not. In the final scene of Dash’s novel, however, as a continuation of the film’s proclamation of rootedness as central to survivance, Amelia, Myown, Eula, and Clemmie play in the Atlantic surf and chase fiddler crabs on the beach while Elizabeth dances, “her arms stretched skyward as if she would lift on the gentle breeze and fly” (310). This moment encapsulates transit, movement, return, and diaspora as acts of freedom—and as acts of joy.

While Dash's film/novel compendium cannot eradicate very real spatial inequities in the Sea Islands, it does lay a discursive groundwork for more equitable cartographic futures—both symbolic and material.



*Figure 26 Carrie Mae Weems: Sea Island Series, 1991-92.*

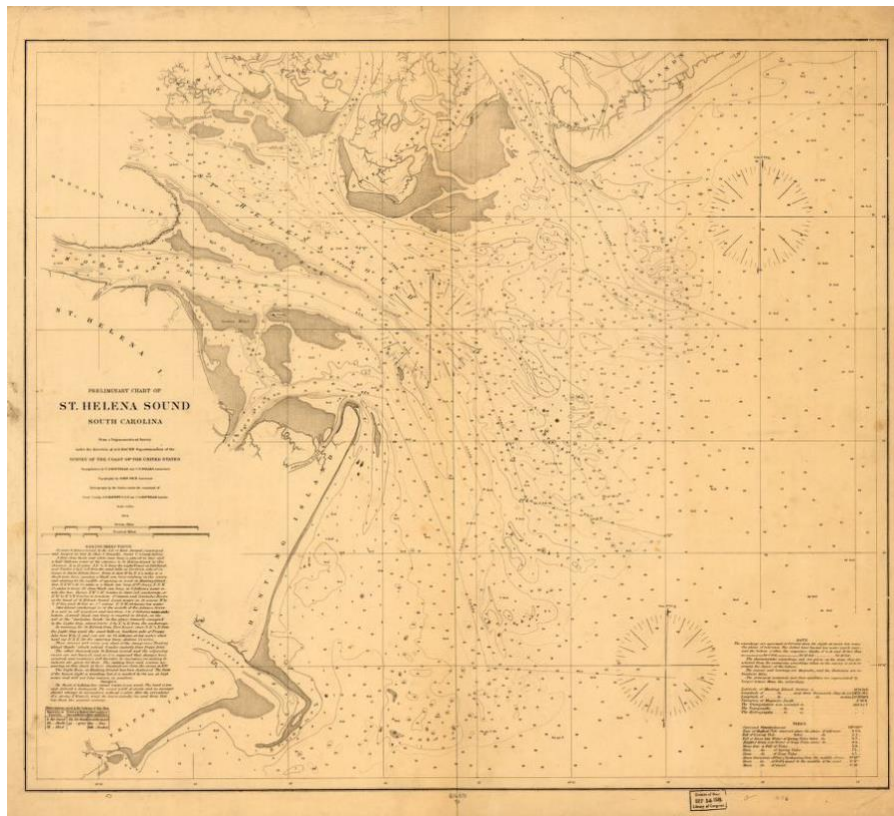


*Figure 27 Carrie Mae Weems: Sea Island Series, 1991-92.*





*Figure 28 Carrie Mae Weems: Sea Island Series, 1991-92.*



*Figure 29 United States Coast Survey. Preliminary chart of St. Helena Sound, South Carolina. [Washington, U.S. Coast Survey, 1864] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.*

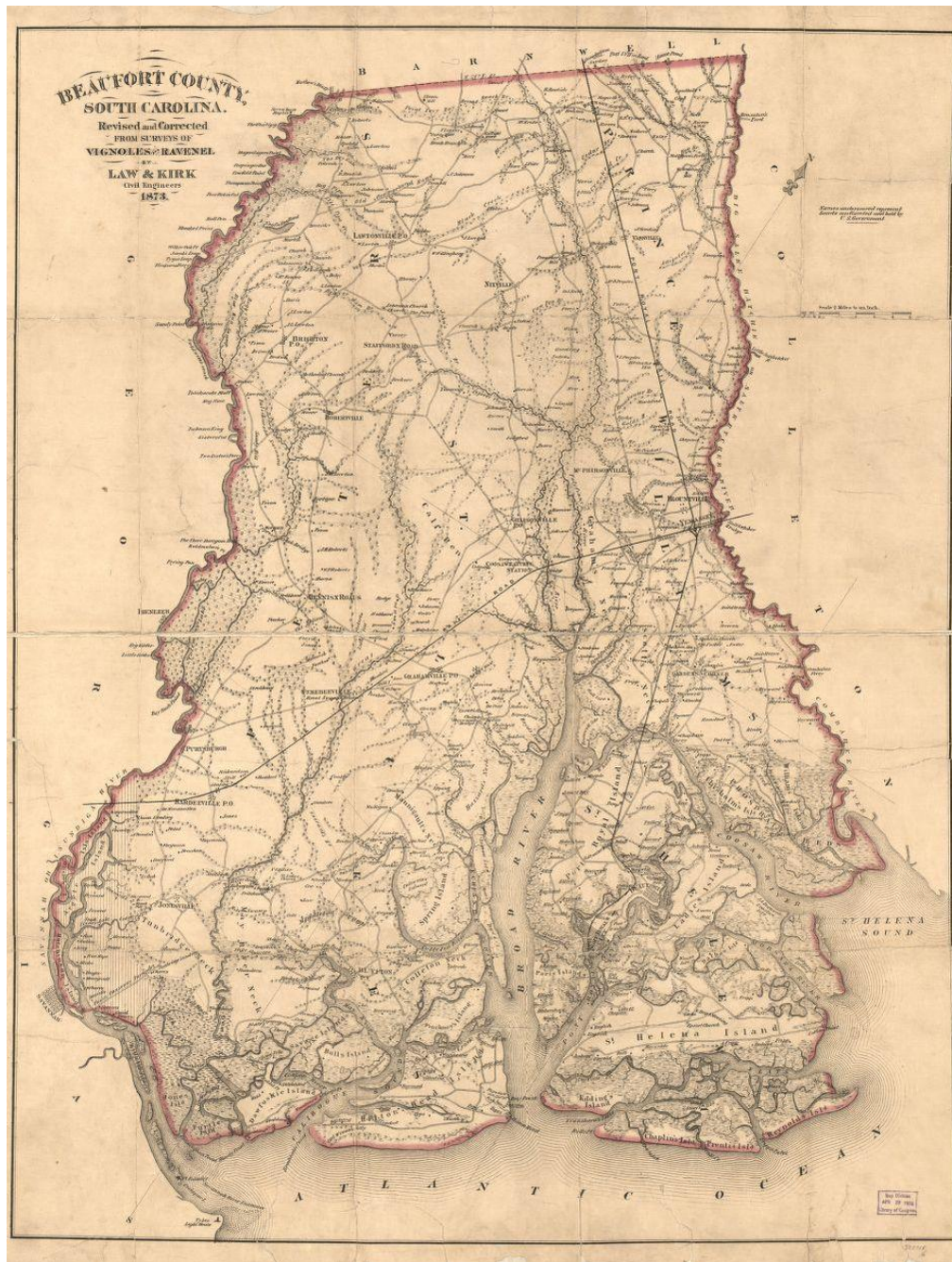
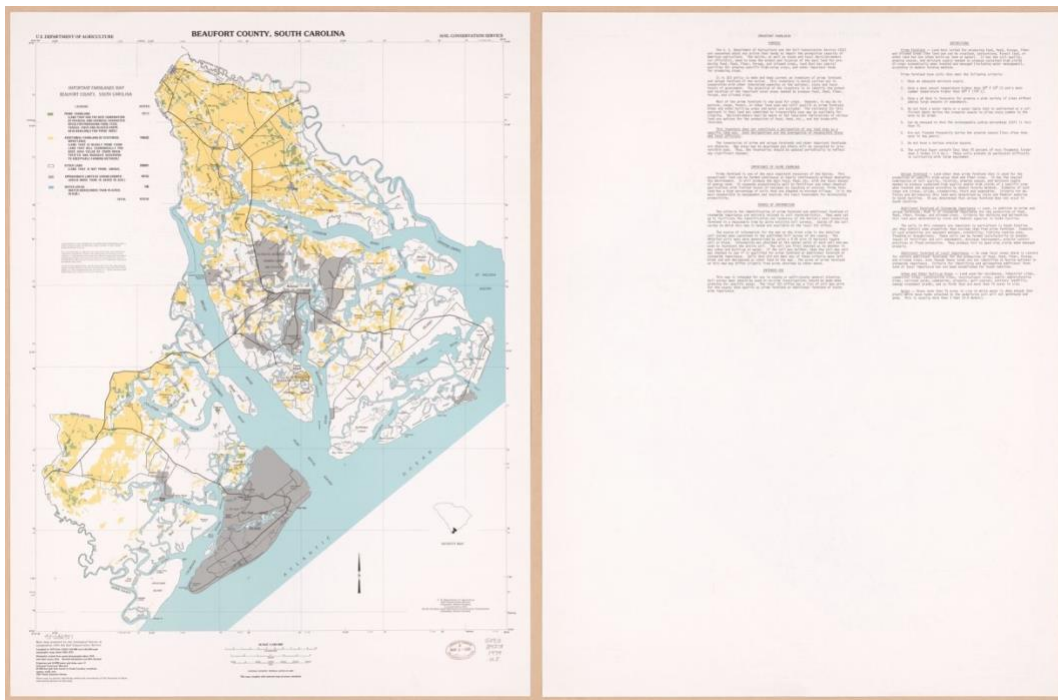


Figure 30 Vignoles, Charles Blacker, and Henry Ravenel. Beaufort County, South Carolina. [South Carolina: Publisher not identified, 1873] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.





*Figure 31 Close-up of Beaufort County, South Carolina.*



*Figure 32 United States Soil Conservation Service, and South Carolina Land Resources Conservation Commission. Important farmlands map, Beaufort County, South Carolina. [Columbia, S.C.: 1979] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.*



*Figure 33 Close-up of Important farmlands map, Beaufort County, South Carolina.*



*Figure 34 Frank M. Hohenberger. "Miss Gleason and live oak tree—7 feet, Dajah Island," 1938. Courtesy The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.*

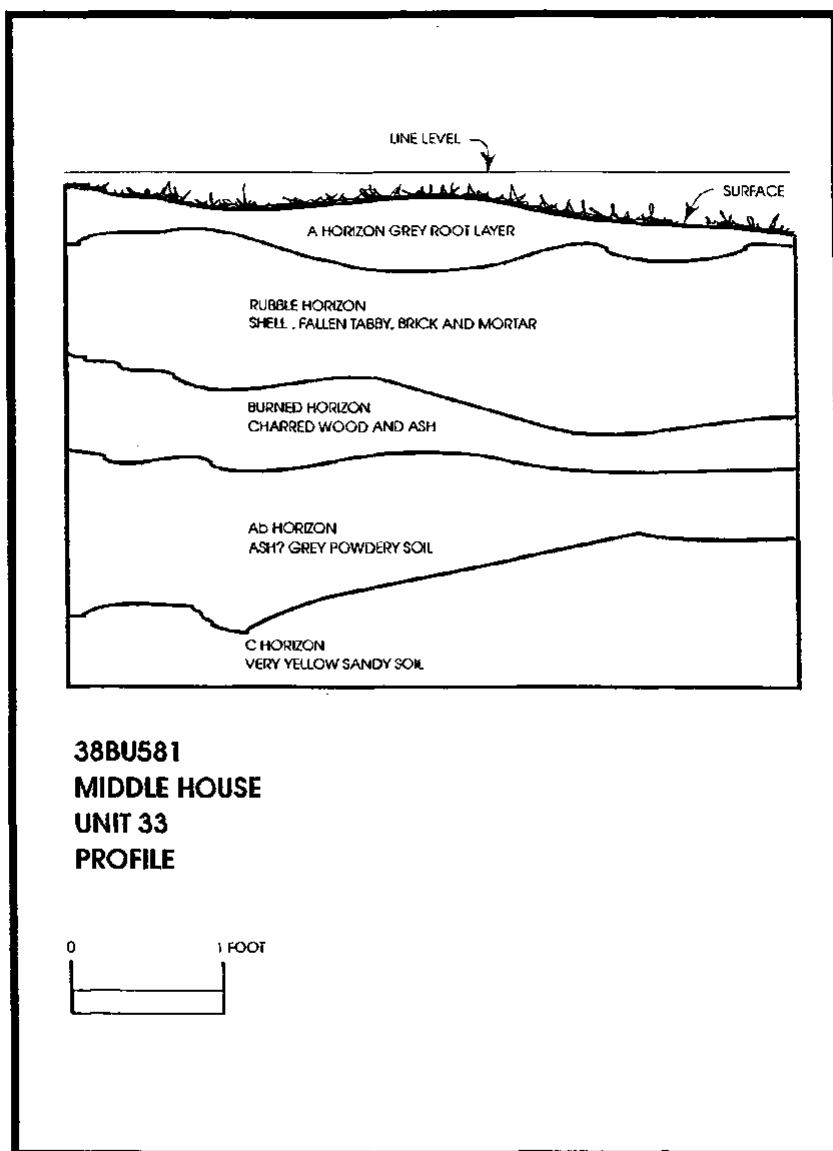


Figure 11. Profile of Unit 33 in the Middle House at 38BU581.

*Figure 35 Middle House Unit 33 Profile, from "The Historical Development of Dataw Island. Prepared for ALCOA South Carolina by Eric C. Poplin, 1993.*





## 6 CONCLUSION

Decolonization is not an ‘and.’ It is an elsewhere.

-Eve Tuck and K.W. Yang

Let me conclude the way I began—with a story.

In November of 2020, 95-year old Maxine Wildcat Barnett, a member of the Yuchi community of Sapulpa, Oklahoma, was hospitalized for Covid. As the last tribal elder who speaks the Yuchi language fluently, her illness sent shockwaves through the community.

The Yuchi language has no dictionary, and no cadre of written documents or materials to preserve its nuances. Because of this, since 2017, Barnett had worked with the Yuchi Language Project in Sapulpa, advocating against the language’s extinction by teaching young people how to speak Yuchi through story and song. Her Yuchi community calls Barnett both the matriarch of their language and gOlaha (meaning grandmother in Yuchi), emphasizing her central role as elder, knowledge-keeper, and shaper of future generations.

A few tense and worried months after her hospitalization, Barnett fortunately recovered. But the shockwaves accompanying the threat of her loss refocused attention on the importance of Native language revitalization programs.

As a result, tribal leaders lobbied congress for financial assistance, and in March of 2021, 20 million dollars was controversially added to the Congressional Covid relief package to support Native American language retention efforts.

While the addition had many proponents, it also had those who vehemently dissented: as Politico reported, “Rep. Ben Cline (R-Va.) said the House bill was full of ‘Democrat pork’ and

called funding for Native languages one of ‘the most egregious provisions,’ while Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) took to the Senate floor to voice his displeasure” (“Race Against Time”).

Graham most notably said: “There’s \$20 million in the bill for the preservation and maintenance of Native American languages. That might be something that makes sense, but we’re dealing with a Covid package.”

I write this conclusion as the Covid-19 pandemic has raged for over eighteen months, decimating communities of color in the US, wiping out tribal elders—the keepers of story and knowledge—and exacerbating long-existing inequities in a deeply flawed medical industrial complex. I write this conclusion at an historical moment when systemic injustices against Black and Native communities are daily and painfully manifested in the loss of life, lack of access to viable medical care, vaccine hesitancy, and the failure of U.S. representatives like Graham to see the devastating effects of Covid-19 on cultural preservation.

The pandemic has also amplified the immediate need for intergenerational care work, the invisible and exacting labor done by so many women and femmes. These same caregivers have also been driven out of the workforce in large numbers, largely due to the extraordinary social and personal cost of this labor. In the last year, Black and Indigenous communities have dealt with the amplified loss—or threatened loss, in the case of Maxine Wildcat Barnett—of elders who carry stories and knowledges central to cultural survivance.

The reverberations of this material loss of language, archive, and story are seismic and immeasurable.

The reverberations of this material loss will shape futures.

It is in this fragile global moment that I tentatively suggest the future of the work I collaborate on in this project: not with the end goal of promoting a neoliberal vision of a robust multicultural America, but instead thinking seriously about what it means to centralize Black and Native women's voices in conversations about world-making.

What happens when we—as scholars, listeners, teachers, and collaborators of complex and intersecting identities—pay attention to the way Black and Native women have always already made the world, mapped geographies, juxtaposed story with narrative, imagined theory and method, interrogated settler-colonial epistemologies, and critiqued fictions of Blackness, Indianness, and Whiteness?

Attentiveness to the way Black and Native women have imagined and reimagined the historical contours of American mythos is central to the project of decolonization. And yet “decolonization” as metaphor and materiality is fraught. Tuck and Yang remind us that “decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous life and land” (“Decolonization is Not a Metaphor” 1). Settler-initiated projects—like this one—must then tread with caution. Like Barbara Christian asks in “A Race for Theory”: “For whom are we doing what we are doing, when we do literary criticism?” (77). This is a tense question: whom *does* the work of literary scholars benefit? How does it advance efforts towards the repatriation of life and land?

Considering the systemic disenfranchisement and exploitation of Black and Native communities by researchers, ethnographers, anthropologists, and scholars, how can settler-initiated literary criticism hold itself responsible to these same communities? These questions are not resolved, but perhaps a tentative answer lies in what Tuhiwai-Smith says about the responsibilities of academics and researchers: “There are diverse ways of disseminating knowledge and of ensuring that research reaches the people who have helped make it” (16).

Tuhiwai-Smith argues for “‘reporting back’ to the people and ‘sharing knowledge’” as two methods of ethical research, suggesting both “assume a principle of reciprocity and feedback” (16).

It is both with and because of this tension between settler-initiated research, academic responsibility, and Black and Native communities that I suggest intersectional reading as a methodology capable of recovering moments of imaginary and material convergence central to the envisioning of decolonial futures. These futures, I argue, are predicated on the purposeful deconstruction of state-sanctioned triangulations of Black, Native, and White. They are also predicated on an active defiance of racial “purity” rhetorics weaponized by the U.S to both invoke identitarian stasis and refute convergent grounds that buzz with possibility from the margins of canonically accepted historiography.

Despite my categorization of the women writers and artists studied here in discrete units of chapters and sections, threads of intersection run throughout this project. Convergent rhythms whisper throughout each chapter, between chapters, and across chapters, revealing the artificiality of scholarly organizational units and classification. For example:

Pauline Hopkins, the author of *Winona*, worked as editor of *Colored American Magazine* from 1902 to 1904. *CAM* would serve as the publication site for many of her novels, including *Winona*. She was ousted after Hampton graduate Booker T. Washington purchased the magazine in 1904 and reconfigured its staffing. While the exact reasons for Hopkins’ dismissal are unknown, DuBois theorized that she was not “conciliatory enough towards white readers” (“The Colored Magazine in America”).

Washington is, of course, deeply connected to the Hampton photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston and revisited by Carrie Mae Weems: he attended the Institute from 1872-

1875, returned to teach and serve as dorm father to American Indian students from 1879-1881, and based his own Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute on its model.

Washington also helped plan the American Negro Exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition, at which Johnston's photographs were exhibited, alongside Thomas J. Calloway and W.E.B. DuBois. The cover of *Colored American Magazine* from November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1900—the publication Hopkins would go on to edit—featured an image of the exhibit and an extensive article detailing its arrangement and contents.

Johnston's photographs of Hampton Institute were prominently featured in the American Negro Exhibit, alongside images by another photographer of Tuskegee, and won the grand prize for excellence. Another influential White woman also exhibited at the Exposition: real estate magnate and business woman Kate Gleason, who purchased Dataw Island in 1927 and cleared it of Black farmers to create her own private vacation estate. Gleason served as an engineer for her father's business, Gleason's Tool Company, and accompanied an exhibit of gear planers created as a representative.

Carrie Mae Weems—who would respond to Johnston's photographs of Hampton—and Julie Dash—who would respatialize Dataw Island—both conducted preparatory research on the South Carolina Sea Islands during the late 1980s. They would also both cite a revision of ethnographic history as a motivation for their research. Dash's resultant film, *Daughters of the Dust*, and Weems' resultant series, *Sea Island Series*, were both first exhibited in 1991.

Dash notes that one of the key aesthetic influences on her film is Black Harlem photographer James VanDerZee and his images of Black women at the turn of the twentieth century ("Making Daughters" 4). While most of VanDerZee's photographs were taken in New York, in 1907 he traveled to Hampton Institute and photographed students and teachers. The

most famous photograph from this series, entitled “Whittier Preparatory School,” is often contrasted with Johnston’s images of the Institute: instead of averting their eyes away from the photographer as in Johnston’s work, the students in VanDerZee’s photograph stare directly at the camera.

Historical connections between Hampton Institute and St. Helena Island abound. For example, Leah Richmond Miner began teaching art at Hampton Institute in 1899, the same year Frances Benjamin Johnston visited campus to create her photographic series. In fact, Miner is featured in several of Johnston’s photographs of students drawing and painting. In the 1930s, Miner traveled to and photographed the Sea Islands, including historic Black farming communities on Dataw. His work was rediscovered by historian Edith Dabbs in the 1960s and published in a volume called *Face of an Island*. It is the most expansive photographic record of St. Helena County from that time period.

Miner’s travels to St. Helena were not coincidental: Hampton had a long-standing connection to the island. H.B. Frissell, the second president of Hampton Institute from 1893-1918, was recruited by the founders of the Penn School, located on St. Helena Island and heralded as one of the country’s first schools for formerly enslaved people, to sponsor the institute. This began a long relationship between Penn and Hampton: Frissell transferred some of Hampton’s teachers to the school and eventually became Board Chairman. A building on campus was named after Frissell in 1925, and still stands today.

LeAnne Howe also centralizes the legacy of Hampton Institute. In *Miko Kings*, she places Hope Little Leader and Justina both at the school: Justina as a teacher and Hope as a student. Later in the novel, Hope attends Jones Academy, a school for “Indians” in Hartshorne,

Oklahoma. Founded by the Choctaw in 1891, Jones Academy still serves as a no-cost American Indian boarding school for tribal nations across the U.S.

The primary plot of *Miko Kings*, however, takes place in Ada, Indian Territory—a small town just 72 miles southwest of Sophia Alice Callahan’s home town of Okmulgee. Scholar Anette Van Dyke speculates that Callahan’s novel *Wynema* may have been the first written in what would become Oklahoma (“Introduction” 123). Her contribution to the literary history of the state and early formations of American Indian novels is something Howe reconfigures in *Miko Kings* through a decolonization of the novel form and a meditation on nation-specific archival practices.

Callahan also taught at several Creek boarding schools: from 1892-93, she taught at Wealaka Mission School, and then in 1893, she moved to the Harrell International Institute, located in Muskogee. Her role in the boarding school movement was complicated—as a part-White member of the Muskogee Creek aristocracy educated in Northern finishing schools, she had connections to both White and Creek communities. Like Ada Bradford and Adele Quinney, two former Hampton students-turned-teachers discussed in Chapter 2, she was both part of an assimilative boarding school system and yet herself marginalized by the State.

These threads of connection weave around and through hallmark imaginaries of Black, Indian, and White identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: boarding school technologies, publications like magazines and novels, photographic culture, the ideologies of exhibition and exposition, and the political contours of geography. These convergent grounds demand our attention as researchers, scholars, literary critics, and collaborators invested in decolonial futures for Black and Native people.

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